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# THOUGHTS ON THE POETS.

# THOUGHTS

ON

# THE POETS:

BY

HENRY T. TUCKERMAN.

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"Poets and philosophers are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."
SHELLEY

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# PETRARCH.

THE traveller between Rome and Florence, by the Perugia road, usually makes a noon-halt at Arezzo; and the ragged urchins of that decayed town, press eagerly around him and vociferously contend for the honour of being his guide to the house of Petrarch. In a few moments he stands before a homely, grey building, in a narrow and rude thoroughfare, upon the front of which is a marble tablet that proclaims it to be the humble dwelling where the poet was born, July 20th, 1304. An incident like this is apt to give an almost magical impulse to the wanderer's thoughts. As he proceeds on his way through a lonely country, over which broods the mellow atmosphere of the South, he is long haunted by the tale of human love thus vividly recalled to his memory. He muses, perhaps, with delight and wonder, upon the celestial power of genius which can thus preserve for the reverence and sympathy of after generations, one among the countless experiences of the heart. Literature has performed no more holy or delightful tasks than those dedicated to Affection. The minds are few that can bring home to themselves, with any cordial or benign effect, either the lessons of history or the maxims of philosophical wisdom. Uncommon clearness and strength of intellect are necessary *in order to* appropriate such teachings. But the *heart, with its* ardent impulses and divine instincts—its *pleadings for* sympathy, its tender regrets, its insatiable

desires, its infinite capacity for devotedness and self-denial —the heart is the grand interpreter of its own rich memorials. This it is which renders Petrarch so near to us in feeling, although removed by centuries from this our actual era. This it is which makes the transatlantic pilgrim gaze with emotion upon the spot of his nativity, and feel akin to him in being chartered with a similar, though perhaps undeveloped power and "strong necessity of loving." It is not like a dry antiquarian research to summon his person and character before us. As a man of civic and social responsibilities, he belongs to the thirteenth century; as a lover, he is a citizen of all time and a brother of all living men who find their chief joy, trial and inspiration, in the exercise and interchange of sentiment.

> "They keep his dust in Arqua where he died;
> The mountain-village where his latter days
> Went down the vale of years; and 'tis their pride—
> An honest pride, and let it be their praise,
> To offer to the passing stranger's gaze
> His mansion and his sepulchre; both plain
> And venerably simple, such as raise
> A feeling more accordant with his strain,
> Than if a pyramid formed his monumental fane."

It is not our intention to discuss the literary merits of Petrarch. This has been done too well and too often already. It is to the spirit which dictated and which has long been embalmed in his Sonnets, that we desired to call attention. Frequent doubts have, indeed, been cast upon the sincerity of these effusions. This, we imagine, results from the vain attempt to catch their legitimate meaning by a consecutive perusal. Devoted as they are *to one subject, and* cast in the same verbal form, a mono*tonous and artificial* impression is the natural consequence *of reading one* after another, like the stanzas of a long

poem. To be enjoyed and appreciated, they should be separately considered. Each sonnet was the expression of a particular state of feeling; and it was not until after the poet's death that they were collected. Written at various times and in different moods, but always to give utterance to some particular thought or fantasy having reference to his love, there is necessarily more or less sameness pervading the whole. It is undeniable that many of the conceits are frigid, and betray the ingenuity of fancy rather than the ardour of passion; but these arose from the habit of "thinking too precisely"—a characteristic of all meditative beings, and which is so admirably illustrated in Hamlet's speculations. It should also be borne in mind that Petrarch's inducement thus elaborately to depict the varied effects of love upon his nature, was to give vent to emotions which were denied any other channel of escape:

"La vive voci m' erano interditti,
Ond' io gridai con carta e con inchiostro." *

It is evident that he wrote chiefly from retrospection, and failed in the command of his mind, when under the immediate influence of deep tenderness or baffled desire:

"Piu volte incomminciai di scriver versi,
Ma la penna e la mano e' l'intelletto
Rimaser vinti nel primier assalto." †

This sufficiently proves the genuineness of his inspiration. His allusions to the laurel-tree in reference to the name of his beloved, to the window at which he had seen her seated, to the waters beside which she had reposed, to the places in which he encountered her, and to her dress

* The living voice was denied me, hence I sought utterance in writing.

† *Often I began* to write verses, but the pen, the hand and the *mind were overcome* at the first attempt.

and the colour of her eyes and hair, her gait, her salutations, her smile, and her glances, are but the native overflowings of an ardent mind. It is the effect of ideality not only to exalt the actual into infinite possibility, but to reveal in detail every circumstance and association which Love has made sacred. Even those who can scarcely be deemed imaginative, are sensible of the magic agency of sounds, perfumes and the most ordinary visible objects connected, in their memories, with persons or localities singularly endeared. It is only requisite to extend this familiar principle to understand why Petrarch dwells with such fondness on the most trivial associations. They helped him to recall the past, to bring more distinctly before him the image of Laura, and to realize more completely the delicious though tyrannical sway of Love. The same explanation may be given of his constant appeals to Nature. The heart is thrown upon itself in love as in grief. Few, if any, fellow-beings, however near and dear, are fitted to share the confidence of our inmost affections. They have a sacredness, a delicacy, an individuality which makes us shrink from exposing them even to friendly observation :

> "Not easily forgiven
> Are those, who, setting wide the doors that bar
> The secret bridal-chambers of the heart,
> Let in the day."

The poet needed relief when denied sympathy, and therefore he apostrophised Nature, whose silent beauty wins but never betrays. It is worthy of remark that Petrarch was a skeptic in regard to love, as an enduring and deep principle of the human soul, until his own *experience con*verted him so effectually to the faith.

> ——— "e quel che in me non era,
> *Mi* pareva un miracolo in altrui."

Many live and die knowing nothing of love except through their intellect. Their ideas on the subject are fanciful, because it has never been revealed by consciousness. Yet it were to question the benignity of God, to believe that an element of our being so operative and subtle, and one that abounds chiefly in the good and the gifted, is of light import or not susceptible of being explained by reason, justified by conscience, and hallowed by religion, and thus made to bear a harvest not only of delight but of virtue. Love, Petrarch maintains, is the crowning grace of humanity, the holiest right of the soul, the golden link which binds us to duty and truth, the redeeming principle that chiefly reconciles the heart to life, and is prophetic of eternal good. It is a blessing or a bane, a weakness or a strength, a fearful or a glorious experience, according to the soul in which it is engendered. Let us endeavour to define its action and vindicate its worth, as set forth in the Sonnets of Petrarch.

All noble beings live in their affections. While this important fact has been ever illustrated by poets, it is seldom fully recognized in moral systems or popular theology. Yet, if we would truly discern the free, genuine elements of character, the history of the heart affords the only authentic ground of judgment. Love has been, and is, so mightily abused, that in the view of superficial reasoners it becomes identified rather with feebleness than strength. Yet, in point of fact, its highest significance can alone be realized by natures of singular depth and exaltation. To the unperverted soul, instead of a pastime it is a discipline. Once elevated from a blind instinct to a conscious principle, it is the mighty tide which sways all that is solemn and eternal in life. To love, in one sense, is, indeed, little more than an animal necessity; *but to love nobly*, profoundly—to love, as Madame de *Staël expresses* it, "at once with the mind and with the

heart," to dedicate to another mature sympathies, is the noblest function of a human being. The fever of passion, the ignoble motives, the casual impulses which belong to our nature, blend, it is true, with the exercise of all affection, but love, in its deepest and genuine import, is the highest and most profound interest of existence. This is a truth but imperfectly understood; but there are few spirits so utterly bereft of celestial affinities as not to respond more or less cordially, to every sincere appeal to a capacity so divine. All the folly of vain imaginations, all the coarseness of vulgar sensuality, all the scorn of mental hardihood, while they profane the name, can never violate the sacred realities of love. There have been, and there ever will be earnest and uncompromising hearts, who bravely vindicate a faith too native and actuating ever to be eradicated. Such natures can only realize themselves through love, and in proportion to their integrity will be their consciousness of the glory of this attribute. They intuitively anticipate its pervading influence upon their character and happiness. They feel that within it lies the vital points of their destiny, and through it their access to truth. The world may long present but glimpses of what they ever watch to descry. Life may seem barren of a good never absent from their inward sense. At times, from very weariness, they may be half inclined to believe that the love for which they pray, is but a poetic invention, having no actual type. Witnessing so much apparent renunciation, they may, at last, regard themselves as vain dreamers, and look back, with bitter regret upon years of self-delusion. But the great want, the haunting vision, the prophetic need, assert themselves still; and when, through self-denial and fervent trust, the dawn glimmers upon their souls, the lonely vigil and restless fears of the night are forgotten in "a peace which the world can neither give nor take away."

To some minds it may appear sacrilegious thus to indentify love with religion, but the sentiments rightly understood, are too intimately allied to be easily divided. It is through the outward universe that natural theology points us to a Supreme Intelligence; and it is through the creature that spirits of lofty mould most nearly approach the Creator. Coleridge describes love as the absorption of self in an idea dearer than self. This is doubtless the only process by which the problem of human life is solved to exalted natures. It is in vain that you bid them find content, either in the pleasures of sense or the abstractions of wisdom, however keen their perceptions, or ardent their passions. They know themselves born to find completion through another. A subtle and pleading expectancy foretells the advent of a Messiah. They seek not, but wait. It is no romantic vision, no extravagant desire, but a clear and deep conviction that speaks in their bosoms. This is the germ of the sweetest flower that shall adorn their being; this is their innate pledge of immortality, and ceaselessly invokes them to self-respect and glory.

There is something essentially shallow in the play of character, until deep feeling gives it shape and intensity. The office of love is to induce a strong and permanent motive, and it is this process which concentrates all the faculties of the soul. Hence the satisfaction which follows; —a condition wholly different from what was previously regarded as enjoyment. Through vanity and the senses, partial delight may have been obtained; but it was a graft upon, rather than a product of the heart. The blessedness of true love springs from the soul itself, and is felt to be its legitimate and holiest fruit. Thus, and thus alone, is human nature richly developed, and the best *interests of life wisely* embraced. Shadows give way to *substance, vague* wishes to permanent aims, indifferent

moods to endearing associations, and vain desire to a "hope full of immortality." Man is for the first time revealed to himself, and absolutely known to another; for entire sympathy, not friendly observation, is the key to our individual natures; and when this has fairly opened the sacred portal, we are alone no more forever!

Petrarch affords a good illustration of this subject, because he has bequeathed a record of his experience, which fame has rendered classical. In him, as in every one, the influence of the sentiment was modified by particular traits of character. It is not requisite that we regard him as the most unexceptionable example of a lover, in order to avail ourselves of the autobiography of the heart which he left behind him. It is enough to acknowledge the fact that his career was mainly swayed by a feeling which, in most men, exerts but a temporary and casual agency; and that the most genial outpourings of his soul have exclusive reference to its phases. It is not pretended that he is faultless; but the good taste of ages has hallowed his effusions, and, on this account, they furnish an authoritative exposition. In order to estimate aright these revelations, let us glance at their author as a man.

He was, then, in relation to society, one of the most important personages of his time. With many his name is merely associated with the idle dreams of a minstrel, and his existence is recalled as that of an imaginative devotee, who lived chiefly to indulge his private tastes. That the case was far otherwise is indisputable. Few prominent men of that era so richly deserve the title of patriot. His love of country was fervent and wise, and his efforts in her behalf unremitted. The frequent and momentous political embassies to which he was appointed, and the cheerful zeal with which they were fulfilled, is proof enough of his political talent and noble enterprise.

The high consideration he enjoyed, both with princes and people, his steady friendship with individuals of high rank and influence, the interest he manifested in Rienzi's unsuccessful efforts to restore Italy to freedom, his voluminous correspondence on questions relating to the public weal, evince, among other facts, that he enacted no useless or ignoble part on the world's broad arena. Nor is this all. If Petrarch excelled the mass of every age in the refinement and earnestness of his affections, he was also far beyond his own in knowledge and liberality. We can trace in his writings the slumbering embers of the flame afterwards kindled by Luther, and the same devotion to liberty, which in the progress of time, found scope and realization on this continent. The great principles of free government and religious inquiry, that in our day have become actual experiments, are discoverable in the ardent speculations and elevated desires of the bard of Laura. He was the uncompromising advocate of civil and ecclesiastical reform, and threw all the weight of his literary reputation into the scale of progress. This end he promoted more signally by learned researches and the circulation of ancient manuscripts, so as to become identified with the revival of letters. These objects were methodically pursued throughout his life. They formed no small portion of that external activity, which is so often wasted upon selfish objects, and this is in itself sufficiently glorious to vindicate his life from the charge of inutility.

In estimating his moral traits, it should be remembered that the sunshine of fame made him conspicuous, and subjected his behaviour to a keener scrutiny than is the lot of the obscure. We may safely deem the judgment of contemporaries critical and searching, especially as it is the usual fate of superior gifts to attract a large share of envy as well as admiration. The biographers

of Petrarch have gleaned but two authentic charges, which can, even in the view of more recent and enlightened moralists, sully the pervading brightness of his character. He was the father of two illegitimate children—for whose temporal and spiritual welfare he amply provided. Such a fact, in those times, was not only regarded as venial from the license of manners that prevailed, but considered especially excusable in churchmen, on account of their obligation to celibacy. All testimonies concur in representing his habitual course as remarkably exemplary, and the disgust and indignation he evidently feels at the dissolute manners of the papal court, as well as long years of pure and devoted love and studious retirement, assure us that Petrarch's soul was far above the baseness of habitual dissipation. He may have lapsed from strict virtue, but he never lost for her either his allegiance or sympathy. In an age famous for libertinism and courtly adulation, he preserved to an extraordinary degree, his self-respect and purity of heart. His native instincts rendered the pursuit of wisdom, communion with the great and good of past times, the society of the learned and gifted, and the study of nature infinitely more attractive than any less ennobling pleasures. Compared with those around him, his example was worthy of all praise, and a sincere vein of conscientious sensibility and repentant musing, mingles with and lends pathos and dignity to his strains of love. The other charge which has been preferred against him is vanity. This, however, seems from his own confession and the opinion of others, to have been a youthful weakness, chiefly manifested by a fondness for dress, which disappeared as soon as his mind and heart became interested. He is described as quite indifferent to wealth, and of a singularly reserved and meek demeanour. He was by nature and habit a severe student, and delighted to

meditate in the open air, and alternately lead the life of a recluse and a traveller, filling his mind with knowledge and reflection, and his heart with thoughts of love and piety.

Such was the man who on the morning of Good Friday, at the church of Santa Clara, at Avignon, met Laura; their eyes encountered, and from that moment the destiny of his affections was sealed. The very idea suggested by this fact,—that of love at first sight, doubtless appears to the majority of readers, particularly those of northern origin, a piece of absurd romance. Yet, let us endeavour to regard it calmly and thoughtfully, and discover if there be no actual foundation for such an experience. Truthful human beings, whom the world has not perverted, express in their looks and manners, their genuine souls. Where there is depth of feeling, and pride of character, this natural language is still more direct and impressive. Such individuals, indeed, habitually conceal their moods and sentiments under a veil of passionless reserve, or animal gaiety; and when this is drawn aside, their tones and features only speak with more eloquent significance from the previous restraint. No medium is more true and earnest in thus conveying the heart's language than the eye. The cold and worldly may have deadened its beams by selfishness and cunning, and the sensualist can only summon thither an earthly and base fire; but they of child-like frankness and undimmed enthusiasm, may utter by a glance more than words could unfold. It is then not a mere vagary of imagination, but a rational and perfectly credible thing, that the meeting of the eyes of two candid, noble beings, should reveal them essentially to each other; and such, we doubt not, was the case with Petrarch and Laura. A *very important* principle is involved in such an *incident. It proves* that Love, in its highest sense, is

properly *Recognition*. Any man of winning address and knowledge of the world, may, by appeals to the passions, the interests or the unappropriated tenderness of a guileless, confiding woman, win her to himself. But let him not imagine that such an outrage to the majesty of Love, will secure to him its richest fruits. His pride may be gratified by the dependence of a fair and gentle being, and her endearments may afford a delightful solace in his listless hours. Over her person, her time, her actions, he may exercise a permanent control. If she be infirm of purpose, she may become a domestic slave, the creature or, at least, the honoured pet of her liege lord. The mass of women may, and probably do not feel conscious that their dearest rights have been thus invaded; and men, in general, doubtless think that their disinterestedness is sufficiently indicated by providing all the external sources of comfort for the objects of their choice. There is but a limited degree of conscious wrong on either side. When no deep affections, no intense sympathies crave gratification, society gains much, and the individual loses nothing by conventional alliances. But in questions of this nature, it must be ever remembered, that there are here and there, scattered among the multitude of human beings, souls that do not slumber, hearts that have burst the chrysalis of vegetative life, and feel the tides of individual desires, hopes, and aspirations fearfully sway their pulses. Sacred are the pure instincts, holy before God, if not before man, the spiritual necessities of such as these. If self-knowledge has come too late, if their outward fate is sealed before their inward wants have been revealed to their own consciousness, then to religion and self-control must they look to enable *them* to fulfil the letter of the bond. Yet, in so doing, *if they possess* any true depth of character, they will *never compromise* their highest privilege; they will

never profane the sentiment of love by hypocrisy; they will recognize and rejoice in their ideal when once encountered. In the solemn privacy of their bosoms, will be cherished the being to whom their hearts went instinctively forth. For the sake of this pure and deep sentiment, they will be faithful to outward duty, calm and trusting, and maintain self-respect and hope unstained. Tennyson has drawn a portrait bitterly true to experience, of the influence of uncongenial bonds upon a large class of women, in "Locksley Hall." But all of the sex are not the mere passive victims of habit and circumstance. A few peerless exceptions really live,—women, who through remarkable spirituality of character, or firm will, united to fine moral perceptions, prove superior to outward fate, and never permit the temple of their hearts to be crossed, save by the one, who, from affinity of soul, is an authorized and welcome guest. There is a grandeur in such vindication of rights, too holy for human law to protect, but, at the same time, too ennobling and heavenly for virtue to abandon.—

> "Patience, quiet, toil, denial,—
> These though hard, are good for man;
> And the martyred spirit's trial
> Gains it more than passion can."

It is on these principles that we account for the conduct of Laura—a subject of endless discussion among the critics of Petrarch. The idea, that his love was wholly unreciprocated, is contradicted by the very nature of things. The truth is, a degree of mutual sentiment is absolutely necessary to keep affection alive for a great length of time. It is true we hear of instances that seem, at a superficial view, to justify a different conclusion; *but, generally speaking*, the martyrs to such vain *devotion at last discover* that their passion originated in

the imagination, not the heart. There are evidences enough in the Sonnets of Petrarch, that his love was returned; and we can scarcely conceive that a feeling of this kind, toward such a man, if once excited should be lukewarm or ill-defined. He speaks of Laura's "amoroso sguardo," (loving glance) and of her turning pale at hearing of his intended absence. The very complaints he breathes of her pride, coldness, and reserve, betray a consciousness, on her part, more gratifying as proofs of interest, from such a woman, than the sweetest blandishments of the less sustained and magnanimous of the sex. It is probable that the conscientious behaviour of her husband, gave Laura no just ground for breaking a contract into which she had voluntarily, though perhaps blindly, entered. Her children, too, had claims which were paramount and sacred. Being, as her lover describes her, of a high nature, with a clear sense of right, and a rare degree of self-control, she regulated her conduct by the strictest law of propriety. She was too generous to follow out her inclinations, even if she felt them perfectly justifiable, at the expense of others. But while in outward act she was thus scrupulous, how easy it is for us to imagine the inner life of her heart! There she was free. The world's cold maxims had no authority within her innocent bosom. She could brood with the tenderest devotion in her hours of solitude, over the gifts and graces of her lover. She could cherish every token of his regard. In society, in her walks, wherever they met, she was at liberty for the time, to realize in her soul, that he was her spirit's mate, the chosen, the beloved, the one in whose presence she alone found content; whose love was the richest flower in her life's chaplet, and the *dearest hope* that reconciled her to death. In this and a *world of similar* emotions, there was no infidelity. From *the hour she* knew, by experience, the meaning of

Love, it is impossible, with a conscience so delicate she could have ever professed it for her husband. Her obligations to him were those of duty, and, as far as he deserved it, respect. Perhaps he never made a claim upon her sentiment; perhaps he had not the soul to know its meaning. And here let us notice a beautiful trait of what many deem a weak passion, when it is awakened in superior natures. The very characteristics which induced Laura to preserve her decorum and to fulfil her duties—and which her lover often deemed cold and unkind—were those that won and kept his heart. Such a man would have wearied of a weak woman, living only in herself. His nature was too lofty to take advantage of feebleness. The same aspiring spirit that made him a patriot and a bard, exalted his character as a lover. Even in his affections he reverenced the divine principles of truth and equality. His chosen was a woman who understood herself, who had an intelligent, not a slavish need of him; who, in the frank nobleness of womanhood, was his genial friend, whose pure and strong heart spontaneously responded unto his. Some of his most common allusions to her personal traits, and points of character, enable us readily to infer the nature of the charm that won and kept the poet's heart. He says, "*non era l'andar cosa mortale,*" (her movements were not mortal.) How much this expresses to the mind of one aware of the moral significance of a woman's air and gait! *L'angelica sembianza umile e piana;* (her angelic semblance meek and affable,) combined with *Il lampeggiar dell' angelico riso,* (the flash of her heavenly smile,) give the most vivid idea of that union of ardour of soul with lofty principle, which is the perfection of the sex. Such phrases as *l'umilita superba,* (proud humility), *il bel tacere,* (beautiful silence), *dolci sdegni* (sweet disdain), *in aspetto pensoso anima lieta,* (a glad soul

beneath a thoughtful aspect,) *l' atto che parla con silenzio,* (the act which speaks silently,) *in alto intelletto un puro cuore,* (a pure heart blended with a high mind)—all convey the image of a woman endowed with fine perception, child-like tenderness, and moral courage—a union of qualities eminently fitted to create not merely love, but a love partaking of reverence, such a love as justifies itself, and cannot but produce, not only mutual delight, but mutual goodness.

If Laura had been less of a character, she could not have so long and deeply interested Petrarch; and if he had been equally self-sustained, she would have been more indulgent. The habits of the age, the presence of a licentious court, and the personal fame of her lover, threw more than ordinary impediments in the way of their intimate association, and rendered prudence singularly necessary. These causes sufficiently explain the behaviour of Laura, who, as one of her biographers remarks "always seems to think that modesty and her own esteem are the most beautiful ornaments of a woman." It is evident that she preserved composure because his temperament was so excitable; and through all the years of their attachment, it was her legitimate part continually to watch over the citadel of love, which his impatience would otherwise have betrayed. She was serene, modest, and self-possessed; he, variable and impassioned. Hence they loved. Each supplied the deficient elements of character to the other; and found a secret and intimate joy, of which the voluptuary or worldly-wise never dream, in thus realizing the purest depths and sweetest capacities of their natures.

The ennobling influence of Petrarch's attachment is variously manifested. It raised him above the thraldom *of sensuality,—*

Da lei ti vien l'amoroso pensiero
Che, mentre 'l segui al sommo Ben t' invia,
*Poco prezzando quel ch' ogni uom desia.**

It confirmed his faith in immortality. After Laura's death, he assures us that he lived only to praise her. To this event he alludes with beautiful pathos:

Quando mostrai di chiuder gli occhi, apersi.†

Then the vanity of the world became a thing of solemn conviction, and he turned to God with a singleness of faith never before experienced. It was his only comfort to imagine her in heaven; and his great hope there to be reunited. He lived upon the memory of her graces, and was encouraged by her angel visits. He speaks of her, even while living, as associated with the idea of death:

Chiamando Morte e lei sola per nome.‡

This is true to the passion in its exalted form. There is no range infinite enough for deep sentiment but one which includes the perspective of a boundless future. Hence the melancholy of all great emotion. "Mio bene" (my good) is a simple but significant epithet which the poet habitually applies to the object of his affections; and

Pace tranquilla, senza alcum affano,§

is the state of feeling that he declares is induced merely by her glance. He blesses the day, the month, the year, the season, the moment, the country, and the very spot of their first meeting:

* From thee comes the loving thought, following which, I am led to the supreme good, little prizing that which all men desire.

† When she seemed to close her eyes, they opened.

‡ *Calling thee and death* by one name.

§ *Tranquil peace, without* a single sigh.

Benedetto sia 'l giorno e'l mese el'anno
E la stagione e'l tempo e l'ora e l' punto
E 'l bel paese e'l loco ov' io fui giunto
Da due begli occhi che legato m'hanno.

He recognizes this o'ermastering sentiment as at once the highest blessing and the great discipline of his life; and speaks of Love as his adversary as well as his delight.

Sempre convien che combattendo vivo.*

He is painfully sensible of the chains he wears, but feels such captivity superior to freedom:

Il giogo e le catene e i ceppi
Eran piu dolce che 'l'andar sciolto.†

In a word, all that is permanently beautiful in the harvest of his existence, he ascribes to his love:

Onde s' alcum bel frutto
Nasce di me, da voi vien prima il seme,
Io per me son quasi un terreno asciutto
Culto da voi; et 'l pregio e' vostro in tutto.‡

Petrarch's constancy has been a subject of astonishment to those whose vivacity of feeling is infinitely greater than its depth. To such it is not love that the heart requires, so much as excitement. They have only a French perception of sentiment, and *affair du cœur* is the flippant term that best describes their idea of the part which the affections occupy in the scheme of happiness. A temporary indulgence of amatory feeling resorted to like equestrian exercises, or a cup of coffee, as an agreeable stimulant, an antidote for *ennui*, an available method

* It is necessary that I always live fighting.

† The yoke, the chains, and the bonds were more sweet than to go free.

‡ *Hence, if any* beautiful fruit grows in me, from thee came its *seed. Of myself, I* am, as it were, a barren soil, cultivated by *thee, and all the* product is thine.

of producing a sensation, to stir the vapid atmosphere of routine—such is love to those who marvel at constancy. Let them not take the holy name on their lips, at least, not the honest English word, but make use of the Gallic synonyme—a term equally applicable to the experiences of the libertine and the fop. To a true human heart, there is no sadder necessity in life than that of inconstancy; for to such a one it can be occasioned but by one cause—the discovery of unworthiness. Has life a more bitter cup than this? Time may dissipate one illusion after another, but yet the good and brave can look on calmly and hopefully, assured that

"Better than the seen lies hid."

But let distrust of the truth, the nobleness, the loyalty, the affection, the high and earnest qualities of a beloved being, once enter the soul, and a withering blight falls on its purest energies. Imagination may deceive, circumstances overpower judgment, false blandishments captivate the senses, but the heart of the noble and ardent goes not permanently forth except to qualities kindred to itself. Around these, as embodied in an associated with a fair and attractive being, the sympathies entwine, and only the canker-worm of depravity can sever their tendrils. Repose is the natural state of the affections. Time deepens all true love. Its joys are richer as, day by day, mutual revelations open vistas of character before unknown. The very good sought in affection is permanence—the essential idea is to secure one congenial object of enduring delight, to which in despondency the heart can revert for consolation, in pleasure, for sympathy. It is to have the blissful consciouness amid every day scenes of barren toil or heartless mirth, *that we* are independent of the crowd, and "*have bread to eat* which they know not of." En-

forced constancy is indeed no virtue. When there is not a lasting basis for love, for truth's sake, let it die out. No hot-bed means can nourish the richest flower of earth; better that it should perish than have no original vitality. Yet, the lover is untrue to his vocation, if, when his best feelings are elicited and reciprocated, when his yearning heart has found its twin, his weary head the bosom that is the pillow of its happy repose, his overflowing tenderness the being who drinks in new life and profound content from his nurture—if, when these high and exacting conditions are satisfied, he do not *will* with all the energy of his moral nature, to avoid every temptation, even to casual infidelity. To the high and warm soul, there is no bond on earth like that of sentiment. And why? It is the free choice, the unshackled desire, the spontaneous self-dedication. The absence of outward chains only makes the inward consecration more absolute, even as the dictate of honour is more imperative with a high-toned man than all the authority of law or custom. Indeed we suggest one undeniable fact to the scoffers at human nature—to those who believe not in its infinite capacities and divine instincts, and account for all its phenomena on material principles—and that is, that sentiment controls passion. When a human being of the strongest animal propensities, loves, (that is, becomes intensely conscious of thorough sympathy with, and peculiar devotion for another,) the body itself acquires a sacredness. It is regarded as the shrine of a hallowing affection, which the touch of an alien would desecrate. It is sentiment only that raises human appetites above those of the brute; and to the unperverted, the only real pleasures of sense are those in which the soul intimately blends. Yet, another *rational inducement* to constancy obtains. Hemmed in *by external obligations* from infancy, with social laws

forever checking our personal action, and forcing the stream of natural feeling into formal channels, it is a glory and a joy, peculiar and almost supernal, to have one altar reared by our own hands, one worship sacred to us alone, one secret fountain which our instinct has discovered in the wilderness of life, where we drink those sweet waters that alone can allay the thirst of the heart. Whoever sees any intrinsic difficulty in constant affection, or abandons any true sentiment, except from the unfitness of its object, is not only ignorant of love, but independent of it. The heart that has really felt privation alone will appreciate abundance; and can no more fail to maintain and cherish the greatest blessing of existence, when once it is absolutely realized, than the stars can renounce their orbits.

Petrarch was true to Love, and developed its elements more richly through solitude. It is evident that his various journeyings and political embassies, as well as his literary and social activity, were occasioned by a sense of duty, and the healthful claims of his mental powers for scope and enterprise, rather than by ambition or any personal views. The reason devotedness and consistency are so rare in the world, is that people usually choose to dissipate instead of concentrating their feelings. Amusement is the very food of being to the majority of those who are not compelled by necessity to daily toil. To triumph in the circles of fashion, skim good-naturedly along the surface of existence, think as little as possible, and avoid all self-communion and earnestness of aim, is the philosophy of life to the multitude. Some adopt this course because they actually do not feel the need of any thing deeper or more sincere; their natures are essentially shallow and capricious, and their joys and sufferings alike superficial. But others, and alas, how many capable of better things! are, as it were, driven

from their true position by circumstances. They feel themselves above the ephemeral pleasures of society, and in point of fact realize no satisfaction in the indulgence of minor tastes and light emotions. They have profound sympathies and magnanimous hearts. Sometimes the poet's word or the orator's appeal, a breeze of spring, an outbreak of genuine sentiment in another—some gleam or echo from a true soul—touches the latent chords in their bosoms. They become, for a moment, conscious of the real ends of their being. Artificial life seems mean and shadowy. They have glimpses of reality, and perhaps retire to their chambers to weep and pray.

At such times comes the vision of Love. Then it is seen how blest and happy is the heart that is absorbed in a worthy object, and lives wholly in its affections. It is by communion with itself that love grows strong. The process of adaptation which is so familiar to women, gradually robs feeling of all depth and intensity. If very elevated in tone of mind, or very energetic in purpose, their freshness of heart may indeed survive long habits of this kind. We sometimes encounter, even in the circles of gay life, a woman who has been idolized for years as beautiful or accomplished, who has long borne the name both of wife and mother; but in her whole person, in the depths of her eyes, in the more earnest tones of her voice, we recognize a virgin soul. Such beings have been kept from perversion by strength of will, clear perception of right or rare purity of mind; but one good has been denied them, one destiny they have as yet failed to achieve—their hearts are undeveloped. The legitimate object of their affections has not appeared. The richest phase of their existence has not dawned. They have *known marriage*, admiration, conquest—but not love. *Thus we feel it to* have been with Laura when she met

the poet. But few thus preserve their sympathies. It is characteristic of those who truly love, to seek in meditation nurture for their sentiment. Only by reflection can we realize any great emotion ; and it is by thought that feeling shapes itself into permanent and well defined vigour. The devotion of a man of meditative pursuits, other things being equal, is therefore infinitely more real and pervading than his whose heart is divided by schemes of fame or gain, and rendered frivolous by common-place associations. Accordingly Petrarch nourished his passion by musing. As to all true lovers, other interests were wholly secondary and external to him, compared with the prevailing feeling of his heart. To enjoy, ay, and to suffer this—it was requisite to be alone, and the name of Vancluse is forever associated with vigils of the love. which found such enduring and graceful expression in his poetry.

# GOLDSMITH.

It is sometimes both pleasing and profitable to recur to those characters in literary history who are emphatically favourites, and to glance at the causes of their popularity. Such speculations frequently afford more important results than the mere gratification of curiosity. They often lead to a clearer perception of the true tests of genius, and indicate the principle and methods by which the common mind may be most successfully addressed. The advantage of such retrospective inquiries is still greater at a period like the present, when there is such an obvious tendency to innovate upon some of the best-established theories of taste; when the passion for novelty seeks for such unlicensed indulgence, and invention seems to exhaust itself rather upon forms than ideas. In literature, especially, we appear to be daily losing one of the most valuable elements—simplicity. The prevalent taste is no longer gratified with the natural. There is a growing appetite for what is startling and peculiar, seldom accompanied by any discriminating demand for the true and original; and yet, experience has fully proved that these last are the only permanent elements of literature; and no healthly mind, cognizant of its own history, is unaware that the only intellectual aliment which never palls upon the taste, is that which is least indebted to extraneous *accompaniments* for its relish.

*It is ever refreshing* to revert to first principles. The

study of the old masters may sometimes make the modern artist despair of his own efforts; but if he have the genius to discover, and follow out the great principle upon which they wrought, he will not have contemplated their works in vain. He will have learned that devotion to Nature is the grand secret of progress in Art, and that the success of her votaries depends upon the singleness, constancy, and intelligence of their worship. If there is not enthusiasm enough to kindle this flame in its purity, nor energy sufficient to fulfil the sacrifice required at that high altar, let not the young aspirant enter the priesthood of art. When the immortal painter of the Transfiguration was asked to embody his ideal of perfect female loveliness, he replied—there would still be an infinite distance between his work and the existent original. In this profound and vivid perception of the beautiful in nature, we perceive the origin of those lovely creations, which, for more than three hundred years, have delighted mankind. And it is equally true of the pen as the pencil, that what is drawn from life and the heart, alone bears the impress of immortality. Yet the practical faith of our day is diametrically opposed to this truth. The writers of our times are constantly making use of artificial enginery. They have, for the most part, abandoned the integrity of purpose and earnest directness of earlier epochs. There is less faith, as we before said, in the natural; and when we turn from the midst of the forced and hot-bed products of the modern school, and ramble in the garden of old English literature, a cool and calm refreshment invigorates the spirit, like the first breath of mountain air to the weary wayfarer.

There are few writers of the period more generally beloved than Dr. Goldsmith. Of his contemporaries, *Burke excelled him* in splendor of diction, and Johnson *in depth of thought*. The former continues to enjoy a

larger share of admiration, and the latter of respect, but the labours of their less pretending companion have secured him a far richer heritage of love. Of all posthumous tributes to genius, this seems the most truly desirable. It recognizes the man as well as the author. It is called forth by more interesting characteristics than talent. It bespeaks a greater than ordinary association of the individual with his works, and looking beyond the mere embodiment of his intellect, it gives assurance of an attractiveness in his character which has made itself felt even through the artificial medium of writing. The authors are comparatively few, who have awakened this feeling of personal interest and affection. It is common, indeed, for any writer of genius to inspire emotions of gratitude in the breasts of those susceptible to the charm, but the instances are rare in which this sentiment is vivified and elevated into positive affection. And few, I apprehend, among the wits and poets of old England, have more widely awakened it than Oliver Goldsmith. I have said this kind of literary fame was eminently desirable. There is, indeed, something inexpressibly touching in the thought of one of the gifted of our race, attaching to himself countless hearts by the force of a charm woven in by-gone years, when environed by neglect and discouragement. Though a late, it is a beautiful recompense, transcending mere critical approbation, or even the reverence men offer to the monuments of mind. We can conceive of no motive to effort which can be presented to a man of true feeling, like the hope of winning the love of his kind by the faithful exhibition of himself. It is a nobler purpose than that entertained by heartless ambition. The appeal is not merely to the judgment and imagination, it is to the universal heart of mankind. Such *fame is emphatically* rich. It gains its possessor warm *friends instead of* mere admirers. To establish such an

inheritance in the breast of humanity, were indeed worthy of sacrifice and toil. It is an offering not only to intellectual but to moral graces, and its possession argues for the sons of fame holier qualities than genius itself. It eloquently indicates that its subject is not only capable of interesting the general mind by the power of his creations, but of captivating the feelings by the earnest beauty of his nature. Of all oblations, therefore, we deem it the most valuable. It is this sentiment with which the lovers of painting regard the truest interpreters of the art. They wonder at Michael Angelo but love Raphael, and gaze upon the pensively beautiful delineation he has left us of himself, with the regretful tenderness with which we look upon the portrait of a departed friend. The devotees of music, too, dwell with glad astonishment upon the celebrated operas of Rosini and some of the German composers, but the memory of Bellini is absolutely loved. It is well remarked by one of Goldsmith's biographers, that the very fact of his being spoken of always with the epithet "poor" attached to his name, is sufficient evidence of the kind of fame he enjoys. Whence, then, the peculiar attraction of his writings, and wherein consists the spell which has so long rendered his works the favourites of so many and such a variety of readers?

The primary and all-pervading charm of Goldsmith is his truth. It is interesting to trace this delightful characteristic, as it exhibits itself not less in his life than in his writings. We see it displayed in the remarkable frankness which distinguished his intercourse with others, and in that winning simplicity which so frequently excited the contemptuous laugh of the worldly-wise, but failed not to draw towards him the more valuable sympathies of less perverted natures. All who have *sketched his biography* unite in declaring, that he could *not dissemble;* and we have a good illustration of his

want of tact in concealing a defect, in the story which is related of him at the time of his unsuccessful attempt at medical practice in Edinburgh—when, his only velvet coat being deformed by a huge patch on the right breast, he was accustomed, while in the drawing-room, to cover it in the most awkward manner with his hat. It was his natural truthfulness which led him to so candid and habitual a confession of his faults. Johnson ridiculed him for so freely describing the state of his feelings during the representation of his first play; and, throughout his life, the perfect honesty of his spirit made him the subject of innumerable practical jokes. Credulity is perhaps a weakness almost inseparable from eminently truthful characters. Yet, if such is the case, it does not in the least diminish our faith in the superiority and value of such characters. Waiving all moral considerations, we believe it can be demonstrated that truth is one of the most essential elements of real greatness, and surest means of eminent success. Management, chicanery and cunning, may advance men in the career of the world; it may forward the views of the politician, and clear the way of the diplomatist. But when humanity is to be addressed in the universal language of genius; when, through the medium of literature or art, man essays to reach the heart of his kind, the more sincere the appeal, the surer its effect; the more direct the call, the deeper the response. In a word, the more largely truth enters into a work, the more certain the fame of its author. But a few months since, I saw the Parisian populace crowding around the church where the remains of Talleyrand lay in state, but the fever of curiosity alone gleamed from their eyes, undimmed by tears. When Goldsmith died, Reynolds, then in the full tide of success, threw his pencil aside in sorrow, and Burke turned from the fast-brightening vision of renown, to weep.

Truth is an endearing quality. None are so beloved as the ingenuous. We feel in approaching them that the look of welcome is unaffected—that the friendly grasp is from the heart, and we regret their departure as an actual loss. And not less winningly shines this high and sacred principle through the labours of genius. It immortalizes history—it is the true origin of eloquence, and constitutes the living charm of poetry. When Goldsmith penned the lines—

> "To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
> One native charm than all the gloss of art,"

he furnished the key to his peculiar genius, and recorded the secret which has embalmed his memory. It was the clearness of his own soul which reflected so truly the imagery of life. He did but transcribe the unadorned convictions that glowed in his mind, and faithfully traced the pictures which nature threw upon the mirror of his fancy. Hence the unrivalled excellence of his descriptions. Rural life has never found a sweeter eulogist. To countless memories have his village landscapes risen pleasantly, when the "murmur" rose at eventide. Where do we not meet with a kind-hearted philosopher delighting in some speculative hobby, equally dear as the good Vicar's theory of Monogamy? The vigils of many an ardent student have been beguiled by his portraiture of a country clergyman—brightening the dim vista of futurity as his own ideal of destiny; and who has not, at times, caught the very solace of retirement from his sweet apostrophe?

The genius of Goldsmith was chiefly fertilized by observation. He was not one of those who regard books as the only, or even the principal sources of knowledge. He recognised and delighted to study the unwritten lore *so richly spread* over the volume of nature, and shad-

owed forth so variously from the scenes of every-day life and the teachings of individual experience. There is a class of minds, second to none in native acuteness and reflective power, so constituted as to flourish almost exclusively by observation. Too impatient of restraint to endure the long vigils of the scholar, they are yet keenly alive to every idea and truth which is evolved from life. Without a tithe of that spirit of application that binds the German student for years to his familiar tomes, they suffer not a single impression which events or character leave upon their memories to pass unappreciated. Unlearned, in a great measure, in the history of the past, the present is not allowed to pass without eliciting their intelligent comment. Unskilled in the technicalities of learning, they contrive to appropriate, with surprising facility, the wisdom born of the passing moment. No striking trait of character—no remarkable effect in nature—none of the phenomena of social existence, escape them. Like Hogarth, they are constantly enriching themselves with sketches from life; and, as he drew street-wonders upon his thumb nail, they note and remember, and afterwards elaborate and digest whatever of interest experience affords. Goldsmith was a true specimen of this class. He vindicated, indeed, his claim to the title of scholar, by research and study; but the field most congenial to his taste, was the broad universe of nature and man. It was his love of observation which gave zest to the roving life he began so early to indulge. His boyhood was passed in a constant succession of friendly visits. He was ever migrating from the house of one kinsman or friend to that of another; and on these occasions, as well as when at home, he was silently but faithfully observing. The result is easily *traced in his* writings. Few authors, indeed, are so *highly indebted* to personal observation for their mate-

rials. It is well known that the original of the Vicar of Wakefield was his own father. Therein has he embodied in a charming manner his early recollections of his parent, and the picture is rendered still more complete in his papers on the "Man in Black." The inimitable description, too, of the "Village Schoolmaster," is drawn from the poet's early teacher; and the veteran, who "shouldered his crutch and told how fields were won," had often shared the hospitality of his father's roof. The leading incident in "She Stoops to Conquer," was his own adventure; and there is little question, that, in the quaint tastes of Mr. Burchell, he aimed to exhibit many of his own peculiar traits. But it is not alone in the leading characters of his novel, plays and poems, that we discover Goldsmith's observing power. It is equally discernible throughout his essays and desultory papers. Most of his illustrations are borrowed from personal experience, and his opinions are generally founded upon experiment. His talent for fresh and vivid delineation, is ever most prominently displayed when he is describing what he actually witnessed, or drawing from the rich fund of his early impressions or subsequent adventures. No appeal to humour, curiosity, or imagination, was unheeded; and it is the blended pictures he contrived to combine from these cherished associations, that impart so lively an interest to his pages. One moment we find him noting, with philosophic sympathy, the pastimes of a foreign peasantry, and, another, studying the operations of a spider at his garret window,—now busy in nomenclating the peculiarities of the Dutch, and anon alluding to the exhibition of Cherokee Indians. The natural effect of this thirst for experimental knowledge, was to beget a love for foreign travel. Accordingly, we find that Goldsmith, after exhausting the narrow circle which his limited means could compass at

home, projected a continental tour, and long cherished the hope of visiting the East. Indeed, we could scarcely have a stronger proof of his enthusiasm, than the long journey he undertook and actually accomplished on foot. The remembrance of his romantic wanderings over Holland, France, Germany, and Italy, imparts a singular interest to his writings. It was indeed worthy of a true poet that, enamoured of nature and delighting in the observation of his species, he should thus manfully go forth, with no companion but his flute, and wander over these fair lands hallowed by past associations and existent beauty. A rich and happy era, despite its moments of discomfort, to such a spirit, was that year of solitary pilgrimage. Happy and proud must have been the imaginative pedestrian, as he reposed his weary frame in the peasant's cottage "beside the murmuring Loire;" and happier still when he stood amid the green valleys of Switzerland, and looked around upon her snow-capt hills, hailed the old towers of Verona, or entered the gate of Florence—the long-anticipated goals to which his weary footsteps had so patiently tended. If any thing could enhance the pleasure of musing amid these scenes of poetic interest, it must have been the consciousness of having reached them by so gradual and self-denying a progress. There is, in truth, no more characteristic portion of Goldsmith's biography, than that which records this remarkable tour; and there are few more striking instances of the available worth of talent. Unlike the bards of old, he won not his way to shelter and hospitality by appealing to national feeling; for the lands through which he roamed were not his own, and the lay of the last minstrel had long since died away in oblivion. But he gained the ready kindness of the peasantry by *playing the flute*, as they danced in the intervals of toil; *and won the favour of the learned by successful disputa-*

on at the convents and universities—a method of rearding talent which was extensively practised in Europe at that period. Thus, solely befriended by his wits, the roving poet rambled over the continent, and, notwithstanding the vicissitudes incident to so precarious mode of seeing the world, to a mind like his, there was mple compensation in the superior opportunities for observation thus afforded. He mingled frankly with the eople, and saw things as they were. The scenery hich environed him flitted not before his senses, like he shifting scenes of a panorama, but became familiar to is eye under the changing aspects of time and season. anners and customs he quietly studied, with the advantage of sufficient opportunity to institute just comparsons and draw fair inferences. In short, Goldsmith was o tyro in the philosophy of travel; and, although the ourse he pursued was dictated by necessity, its superior esults are abundantly evidenced throughout his works. We have, indeed, no formal narrative of his journeyings; ut what is better, there is scarcely a page thrown off, to upply the pressing wants of the moment, which is not nriched by some pleasing reminiscence or sensible hought, garnered from the recollection and scenes of hat long pilgrimage. Nor did he fail to embody the rominent impressions of so interesting an epoch of his hequered life, in a more enduring and beautiful form. The poem of "The Traveller," originally sketched in Switzerland, was subsequently revised and extended. It was the foundation of Goldsmith's poetical fame. The ubject evinces the taste of the author. The unpretending vein of enthusiasm which runs through it, is only qualled by the force and simplicity of the style. The apid sketches of the several countries it presents, are *igorous and pleasing*; and the reflections interspersed, *ound with that* truly humane spirit, and that deep sym-

pathy with the good, the beautiful, and the true, which distinguishes the poet. This production may be regarded as the author's first deliberate attempt in the career of genius. It went through nine editions during his life, and its success contributed, in a great measure, to encourage and sustain him in future and less genial efforts.

The faults which are said to have deformed the character of Goldsmith, belong essentially to the class of foibles rather than absolute and positive errors. Recent biographers agree in the opinion, that his alleged devotion to play has either been grossly exaggerated, or was but a temporary mania; and we should infer from his own allusion to the subject, that he had, with the flexibility of disposition that belonged to him, yielded only so far to its seductions as to learn from experience the supreme folly of the practice. It is at all events certain, that his means were too restricted, and his time, while in London, too much occupied, to allow of his enacting the part of a regular and professed gamester; and during the latter and most busy years of his life, we have the testimony of the members of the celebrated club to which he was attached, to the temperance and industry of his habits. Another, and in the eyes of the world, perhaps, greater weakness recorded of him, was a mawkish vanity, sometimes accompanied by jealousy of more successful competitors for the honours of literature. Some anecdotes, illustrative of this unamiable trait, are preserved, which would amuse us, were they associated with less noble endowments or a more uninteresting character. As it is, however, not a few of them challenge credulity, from their utter want of harmony with certain dispositions which he is universally allowed to have possessed. But it is one of the greatest and most *common errors* in judging of character, to take an isola*ted and partial, instead* of a broad and comprehensive

view of the various qualities which go to form the man, and the peculiar circumstances that have influenced their development. Upon a candid retrospect of Goldsmith's life, it appears to us that the display of vanity, which in the view of many are so demeaning, may be easily and satisfactorily explained. Few men possess talent of any kind unconsciously. It seems designed by the Creator, that the very sense of capacity should urge genius to fulfil its mission, and support its early and lonely efforts by the earnest conviction of ultimate success. To beings thus endowed, the neglect and contumely of the world—the want of sympathy—the feeling of misappreciation, is often a keen sorrow felt precisely in proportion to the susceptibility of the individual, and expressed according as he is ingenuous and frank.

In the case of Goldsmith, his long and solitary struggle with poverty—his years of obscure toil—his ill-success in every scheme for support, coupled as they were with an intuitive and deep consciousness of mental power and poetic gifts, were calculated to render him painfully alive to the superior consideration bestowed upon less deserving but more presumptuous men, and the unmerited and unjust disregard to his own claims. Weak it undoubtedly was, for him to give vent so childishly to such feelings, but this sprung from the spontaneous honesty of his nature. He felt as thousands have felt under similar circumstances, but, unlike the most of men, "he knew not the art of concealment." Indeed, this free-spoken, and candid disposition was inimical to his success in more than one respect. He was ever a careless talker, unable to play the great man, and instinctively preferring the spontaneous to the formal, and "thinking aloud" to studied and circumspect speech. The "*exquisite sensibility* to contempt," too, which he *confesses belonged to* him, frequently induced an appear-

ance of conceit, when no undue share existed. The truth is, the legitimate pride of talent, for want of free and natural scope, often exhibited itself in Goldsmith greatly to his disadvantage. The fault was rather in his destiny than himself. He ran away from college with the design of embarking for America, because he was reproved by an unfeeling tutor before a convivial party of his friends; and descended to a personal rencontre with a printer, who impudently delivered Dodsley's refusal that he should undertake an improved edition of Pope. He concealed his name when necessity obliged him to apply for the office of Usher; and received visits and letters at a fashionable coffee-house, rather than expose the poorness of his lodgings. He joined the crowd to hear his own ballads sung when a student; and openly expressed his wonder at the stupidity of people, in preferring the tricks of a mountebank to the society of a man like himself. While we smile at, we cannot wholly deride such foibles, and are constrained to say of Goldsmith as he said of the Village Pastor—

"And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side."

It is not easy to say, whether the improvidence of our poet arose more from that recklessness of the future, characteristic of the Irish temperament, or the singular confidence in destiny which is so common a trait in men of ideal tendencies. It would naturally be supposed, that the stern lesson of severe experience would have eventually corrected this want of foresight. It was but the thoughtlessness of youth which lured him to forget amid the convivialities of a party, the vessel on board which he had taken passage and embarked his effects, on his first experiment in travelling; but later in life, we *find him wandering* out on the first evening of his arrival *in Edinburgh*, without noting the street or number of his

lodgings; inviting a party of strangers in a public garden to take tea with him, without a sixpence in his pocket; and obstinately persisting, during his last illness, in taking a favourite medicine, notwithstanding it aggravated his disease. A life of greater vicissitude it would be difficult to find in the annals of literature. Butler and Otway were, indeed, victims of indigence, and often perhaps, found themselves, like our bard, "in a garret writing for bread, and expecting every moment to be dunned for a milk-score," but the biography of Goldsmith displays a greater variety of shifts resorted to for subsistence. He was successively an itinerant musician, a half-starved usher, a chemist's apprentice, private tutor, law-student, practising physician, eager disputant, hack-writer, and even, for a week or two, one of a company of strolling players. In the History of George Primrose, he is supposed to have described much of his personal experience prior to the period when he became a professed *litterateur*. We cannot but respect the independent spirit he maintained through all these struggles with adverse fortune. Notwithstanding his poverty, the attempt to chain his talents to the service of a political faction by mercenary motives was indignantly spurned, and when his good genius proved triumphant, he preferred to inscribe its first acknowledged offspring to his brother, than, according to the servile habits of the day, dedicate it to any aristocratic patron, "that thrift might follow fawning." With all his incapacity for assuming dignity, Goldsmith never seems to have forgotten the self-respect becoming one of nature's nobility.

The high degree of excellence attained by Goldsmith in such various and distinct species of literary effort, is worthy of remark. As an essayist he has contributed some *of the most* pure and graceful specimens of English *prose discoverable* in the whole range of literature.

His best comedy continues to maintain much of its original popularity, notwithstanding the revolutions which public taste has undergone since it was first produced; and "The Hermit" is still an acknowledged model in ballad writing. If from his more finished works, we turn to those which were thrown off under the pressing exigencies of his life, it is astonishing what a contrast of subjects employed his pen. During his college days, he was constantly writing ballads on popular events, which he disposed of at five shillings each, and subsequently, after his literary career had fairly commenced, we find him sedulously occupied in preparing prefaces, historical compilations, translations, and reviews for the booksellers; one day throwing off a pamphlet on the Cock-Lane Ghost, and the next inditing Biographical Sketches of Beau Nash; at one moment, busy upon a festive song, and at another deep in composing the words for an Oratorio. It is curious, with the intense sentiment and finished pictures of fashionable life with which the fictions of our day abound, fresh in the memory, to open the Vicar of Wakefield. We seem to be reading the memoirs of an earlier era, instead of a different sphere of life. There are no wild and improbable incidents, no startling views, and with the exception of Burchell's incognito, no attempt to excite interest through the attraction of mystery. And yet, few novels have enjoyed such extensive and permanent favour. It is yet the standard work for introducing students on the continent to a knowledge of our language, and although popular taste at present demands quite a different style of entertainment, yet Goldsmith's novel is often reverted to with delight, from the vivid contrast it presents to the reigning school; while the attractive picture it affords of rural life and humble virtue, will ever *render it intrinsically* dear and valuable.

*But the* "*Deserted* Village" is, of all Goldsmith's pro-

ductions, unquestionably the favourite. It carries back the mind to the early season of life, and re-asserts the power of unsophisticated tastes. Hence, while other poems grow stale, this preserves its charm. Dear to the heart and sacred to the imagination, are those sweet delineations of unperverted existence. There is true pathos in that tender lament over the superseded sports and ruined haunts of rustic enjoyment, which never fails to find a response in every feeling breast. It is an elaborate and touching epitaph, written in the cemetery of the world, over what is dear to all humanity. There is a truth in the eloquent defence of agricultural pursuits and natural pastimes, that steals like a well-remembered strain over the heart immersed in the toil and crowds of cities. There is an unborn beauty in the similes of the bird and her "unfledged offspring," the hare that "pants to the place from whence at first he flew," and the "tall cliff that lifts its awful form," which, despite their familiarity, retain their power to delight. And no clear and susceptible mind can ever lose its interest in the unforced, unexaggerated and heart-stirring numbers, which animate with pleasure the pulses of youth, gratify the mature taste of manhood, and fall with a soothing sweetness upon the ear of age.

We are not surprised at the exclamation of a young lady who had been accustomed to say, that our poet was the homeliest of men, after reading the "Deserted Village" —"I shall never more think Dr. Goldsmith ugly!" This poem passed through five editions in as many months, and from its domestic character became immediately popular throughout England. Its melodious versification is doubtless, in a measure, to be ascribed to its author's musical taste, and the fascinating ease of its flow is the result of *long study* and careful revision. Nothing *is more deceitful than* the apparent facility observable in

poetry. No poet exhibits more of this characteristic than Ariosto, and yet his manuscripts are filled with erasures and repetitions. Few things appear more negligently graceful than the well-arranged drapery of a statue, yet how many experiments must the artist try before the desired effect is produced. So thoroughly did the author revise the "Deserted Village," that not a single original line remained. The clearness and warmth of his style is, to my mind, as indicative of Goldsmith's truth, as the candour of his character or the sincerity of his sentiments. It has been said of Pitt's elocution, that it had the effect of impressing one with the idea that the man was greater than the orator. A similar influence it seems to me is produced by the harmonious versification and elegant diction of Goldsmith.

It is not, indeed, by an analysis, however critical, of the intellectual distinctions of any author, that we can arrive at a complete view of his genius. It is to the feelings that we must look for that earnestness which gives vigour to mental efforts, and imparts to them their peculiar tone and colouring. And it will generally be found that what is really and permanently attractive in the works of genius, independent of mere diction, is to be traced rather to the heart than the head. We may admire the original conception, the lofty imagery or winning style of a popular author, but what touches us most deeply is the sentiment of which these are the vehicles. The fertile invention of Petrarch, in displaying under such a variety of disguises the same favourite subject, is not so moving as the unalterable devotion which inspires his fancy and quickens his muse. The popularity of Mrs. Hemans is more owing to the delicate and deep enthusiasm than to the elegance of her poetry, and Charles Lamb is not less *attractive for his* kindly affections than for his quaint humour. *Not a little* of the peculiar charm of Goldsmith, in

attributable to the excellence of his heart. Mere talent would scarcely have sufficed to interpret and display so enchantingly the humble characters and scenes to which his most brilliant efforts were devoted. It was his sincere and ready sympathy with man, his sensibility to suffering in every form, his strong social sentiment and his amiable interest in all around, which brightened to his mind's eye, what to the less susceptible is unheeded and obscure. Naturally endowed with free and keen sensibilities, his own experience of privation prevented them from indurating through age or prosperity. He cherished throughout his life an earnest faith in the better feelings of our nature. He realized the universal beauty and power of Love; and neither the solitary pursuits of literature, the elation of success, nor the blandishments of pleasure or society, ever banished from his bosom the generous and kindly sentiments which adorned his character. He was not the mere creature of attainment, the reserved scholar or abstracted dreamer. Pride of intellect usurped not his heart. Pedantry congealed not the fountains of feeling. He rejoiced in the exercise of all those tender and noble sentiments which are so much more honourable to man than the highest triumphs of mind. And it is these which make us love the man not less than admire the author. Goldsmith's early sympathy with the sufferings of the peasantry, is eloquently expressed in both his poems and frequently in his prose writings. How expressive that lament for the destruction of the 'Ale-House'—that it would

> 'No more impart
> An hour's importance to the poor man's heart.'

There is more true benevolence in the feeling which prompted *such a thought*, than in all the cold and calculating *philosophy with* which so many expect to elevate

the lower classes in these days of ultra-reform. When shall we learn that we must sympathize with those we would improve? At college, we are told, one bitter night Goldsmith encountered a poor woman and her infants shivering at the gate, and having no money to give them, bringing out all his bed-clothes to keep himself from freezing, cut open his bed and slept within it. When hard at work earning a scanty pittance in his garret, he spent every spare penny in cakes for the children of his poorer neighbours, and when he could do nothing else, taught them dancing by way of cheering their poverty. Notwithstanding his avowed antipathy to Baretti, he visited and relieved him in prison; and when returning home with the 100*l.* received from his bookseller for the 'Deserted Village,' upon being told by an acquaintance he fell in with, that it was a great price for so little a thing, replied, 'Perhaps it is more than he can afford,' and returning, offered to refund a part. To his poor countrymen he was a constant benefactor, and while he had a shilling was ready to share it with them, so that they familiarly styled him 'our doctor.' In Leyden, when on the point of commencing his tour, he stripped himself of all his funds to send a collection of flower-roots to an uncle who was devoted to botany; and on the first occasion that patronage was offered him, declined aid for himself, to bespeak a vacant living for his brother. In truth, his life abounds in anecdotes of a like nature. We read one day of his pawning his watch for Pilkington, another of his bringing home a poor foreigner from Temple gardens to be his amanuensis, and again of his leaving the card-table to relieve a poor woman, whose tones as she chanted some ditty in passing, came to him above the hum of gaiety and *indicated to his ear distress.* Though the *frequent and undeserved* subject of literary abuse, he was *never known to write* severely against any one.

His talents were sacredly devoted to the cause of virtue and humanity. No malignant satire ever came from his pen. He loved to dwell upon the beautiful vindications in Nature of the paternity of God, and expatiate upon the noblest and most universal attributes of man. 'If I were to love you by rule,' he writes to his brother, 'I dare say I never could do it sincerely.' There was in his nature, an instinctive aversion to the frigid ceremonial and meaningless professions which so coldly imitate the language of feeling. Goldsmith saw enough of the world, to disrobe his mind of that scepticism born of custom which 'makes dotards of us all.' He did not wander among foreign nations, sit at the cottage fire side, nor mix in the thoroughfare and gay saloon, in vain. Travel liberalized his views and demolished the barriers of local prejudice. He looked around upon his kind with the charitable judgment and interest born of on observing mind and a kindly heart—'with an infinite love, an infinite pity.' He delighted in the delineation of humble life, because he knew it to be the most unperverted. Simple pleasures warmed his fancy because he had learned their preëminent truth. Childhood with its innocent playfulness, intellectual character with its tutored wisdom, and the uncultivated but 'bold peasantry,' interested him alike. He could enjoy an hour's friendly chat with his fellow lodger—the watchmaker in Green Arbor Court—not less than a literary discussion with Dr. Johnson. 'I must own,' he writes, 'I should prefer the title of the ancient philosopher, viz.; a Citizen of the World, —to that of an Englishman, a Frenchman, an European, or that of any appellation whatever.' And this title he has nobly earned, by the wide scope of his sympathies and the beautiful pictures of life and nature universally *recognized and universally* loved, which have spread his *name over the world.* Pilgrims to the supposed scene of

the Deserted Village have long since carried away every vestige of the hawthorn at Lissoy, but the laurels of Goldsmith will never be garnered by the hand of time, or blighted by the frost of neglect, as long as there are minds to appreciate, or hearts to reverence the household lore of English literature.

# GRAY.

COUNTLESS are the modifications of the poetic faculty. In some natures it is fervent and occasional; in others, calm and prevailing. In the impassioned heart it is a necessary channel for the healthy development of feeling; in the contemplative and gentle bosom it sheds a patient and soothing light, like the beams of the moon on the current of reflection. It is "an ocean to the river of his thoughts" to one man, bearing in one direction his every idea and sentiment, colouring with a gloomy shade or rosy glow his conversation and his reveries, and weaving an illusive atmosphere around every phase of his experience. To another it is a subordinate element, dependent for its activity upon rare excitement and only tinging, almost imperceptibly, the pictures of memory and hope. Burns turned to poetry as a requisite medium of expression, the natural language of his soul. Byron found in its free and glowing strains a response to the earnest pleadings of his heart. To Goldsmith it seems a mirror for the beautiful sentiments he cherished; to Moore, a graceful echo for his patriotic and convivial sympathies. Poets of this class may be said to cultivate verse because to them life has touching mysteries and earnest meanings which verse can best interpret. But there is another species of rhymers to whom poetry is rather a pleasant accident than a necessity, a quiet sentiment rather than an ardent passion, a subject of taste

more than of feeling. To this order of versifiers we are often indebted for the advancement of poetry as an art. Their muse is sufficiently tranquil to be guided with great circumspection. They accordingly have the evenness of pulse and the calmness of eye which is wanted to select, compare, revise and polish. Their effusions often exhibit a metrical ingenuity, a choice of words and a nicety of design and finish which admirably serve to refine the standard of poetic taste. Before these classic models careless habits of versification gradually disappear. Correctness comes to be regarded as an essential quality of standard verse. In a word, the man of ardent fancy and strong feelings is forced to acknowledge that art is as necessary for the success of his poem as nature.

The thoughts which demand utterance must be arrayed in a form beautiful from its symmetry and true construction. The casket must be elaborately finished, or the gems it enshrines will scarcely be appreciated. And thus, by degrees, poetical diction and metre became varied in beauty and elevated in style; and the bard often exhibits as much genius in the felicitous arrangement as in the intrinsic excellence of his musings. Among the poetic artists who have furnished highly finished exemplars of English poesy, is Thomas Gray. Although but a small contributor, as regards the amount, to the jewels of the lyric crown, he is one of the most successful of those who have brought the chaste workmanship of the scholar to the service of the muse.

No frenzy of youthful sentiment hurried Gray into poetry. He was always more absorbed with the creations of other minds than his own. Perhaps the strongest tendency of his nature was the liberal curiosity which made the pursuit of knowledge so dear to him that he was content to become a priest at her shrine. He turned not from the sequestered walks of college life, to plunge

into the excitements of a professional career. His youthful draughts at the "Pierian spring," instead of bracing him for immediate action in the sphere of the world, only awakened a deeper thirst; and although, to please his relatives, he became nominally a bachelor of laws, his entire life was in fact that of a devoted scholar. He studied with no purpose of immediate utility, but to satisfy that craving for large and varied knowledge which was his ruling passion. He presents one of those singular exceptions, so rarely found among men of talent in England, by whom retirement and books are deliberately chosen in preference to politics, diplomacy, a profession or authorship. In the south of Europe, where despotism so effectually closes the avenues to distinction, it is indeed a common thing to see intellectual men devote themselves unobtrusively to the pursuit of some branch of science or literature. Many an enthusiast reaches a happy old age in chase of his favourite phantom. Questions in philology, historical researches, the study of antiquities, and various other fields of mental exercise, beguile minds that would fain, in the prime of their activity, have sought more genial and original occupation. But in England and the United States the gifted and educated man, of limited means, is soon drawn into the vortex of action, and becomes a competitor for the prizes of life. There is something in the very blood of the North which prompts her children to usefulness and honour. It requires no little resolution to stand aside and look on, when all around are in hot pursuit of wealth and fame. Cowper indeed fled from the crowd, but he was driven by a sad necessity. Gray perhaps felt his want of adaptation to general society and ordinary toil. He was quite unambitious, of a delicate constitution, and without that practical tact which insures success. There is something not altogether selfish and unworthy in the philoso-

phy he professed, which made him content to limit his wants to his income, to linger about the scene of his early education, and hold communion with that "ample page, rich with the spoils of time;" gleaning every day some new and valuable information, maintaining his own integrity, respecting the rights of others, and calmly living in amiable and modest scholarship. As a general rule, indeed, this seclusion, this exclusive devotion to personal improvement, however laudable, is not to be desired. We are born to act and suffer with others, to cherish social sympathies, and through them minister to general good. Even as students it were better to act upon the generous sentiment of Sir Thomas Brown: "I study not for myself alone, but for those who cannot study for themselves."

We would have the poet seek his inspiration amid the scenes of perplexity, sorrow and joy that make up human life; we would have him sometimes, like Burns, "put himself upon the regimen of admiring a fine woman;" like Wordsworth, analyse the influence of scenery in training the simple and true soul; and, like Byron, throw himself in the way of the ancient, the beautiful and the adventurous, and reflect in his page the emotions they excite. But an occasional hermit among the poets is pleasing and picturesque, even though his hermitage is a library instead of a grotto. Gray passed a life of self-improvement. The most striking trait both of his muse and his character is refinement. He was one of those men who find their chief gratification in serene enjoyments. He loved to have every thing neat around him. How easily can we fancy his small but nicely arranged figure in that orderly, bacheloric room of his at Cambridge. There are his books carefully arranged, his case of medallions and portfolios of engravings collected during his Italian tour, "a pair of large blue and white old

japan China jars," bequeathed by will to his cousin;—there are a harpsichord and music fairly copied by his own hand, lying by;—boxes of mignionette and other plants adorn the window; there is a tortoise-shell cat, a vase of gold fish, and on the table a blood-stone seal and beautiful inkstand. Every thing bespeaks order, quietude, and tranquil fancies.

And here the man, 'tiny and tiresome,' as he calls himself, sat day after day, thoroughly acquiring Greek literature—divining the mysteries of heraldry and genealogy, mastering the principles of architecture, reading botany, history and poetry, or writing letters to his friends Dr. Wharton, Middleton, Mason or Beattie. He goes forth only to seek some desired tome at the library, to dine or pass an hour at the reading-room. Nothing but the rudeness of some fellow-lodgers induces him to change his quarters. He visits London occasionally, and once abides there for the space of three years, for the sake of copying some manuscripts at the British Museum. With all his temperance, he is afflicted with gout. His health fails; he has times of low spirits. To improve his physical condition and cheer his mind, he has recourse to the never-failing means—a journey—and visits, at different seasons, the English lakes, Scotland and Wales, enjoying their fine scenery and writing pleasant descriptive letters on the subject. And thus glided away the existence of Gray, until the disease under which he suffered attacked a vital part, and in two or three days he calmly departed and was buried beside his mother in the church-yard of Stoke.

The affections which have so large a share in kindling the poetry of most bards, exerted but a limited sway over the intellectual career of Gray. The two beings who *seem most deeply to have* interested him were his mother *and his college-friend,* Richard West. To the former he

owed his education and all that was happy in the association of his childhood. He was an attached son and singularly blessed in one of his parents; and after her decease, never alluded to her without a sigh. West for eight years was bound to him not only by youthful attachment but congenial taste. Their correspondence is manly and confiding. When Gray's last letter to his friend was returned to him unopened, with the news of his death, he felt that one of his sweetest ties to life was broken. They had long communicated to each other the progress of their studies, submitting to each other's inspection their first attempts in verse, and seeking and finding mutual encouragement by strewing the pathway of early application with the flowers of friendship.

Gray paid a tribute to his friend in the following sonnet:

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And redd'ning Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
These can, alas! for other notes repine,
A different object do these eyes require:
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men:
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain:
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain.

West was a youth of rare promise. His early death and the subsequent loss of the poet's mother evidently colour the early efforts of Gray's muse. These bereavements narrowed the already small circle of his sympathies. They led him to regard the aims of the multitude with more indifference than ever, and doubtless in-

duced the tone of distrust of life's promises which mark his best verses. The most buoyant era of Gray's existence, if we judge by his letters, was the period of his absence on the continent. He was fresh from his college studies when, at the invitation of his fellow-student and friend, Horace Walpole, he accompanied him to France and Italy. Every thing was novel and attractive to the mind of Gray. He mingled enough with society to gratify his curiosity. He was indefatigable in his study of the remains of antiquity and the fine arts. Among his papers were found notes, speculative as well as matter of fact, respecting the old masters and the customs of the ancients, which prove his discrimination and taste. His muse seems to have been first inspired by the rugged precipices, the rocky chasms and dark pines of the mountains where the convent of the Grand Chartense is situated. He dwells upon the romantic impressions he there derived, and wrote a Latin ode on the subject in the album of the monks. After the two friends, like most fellow-travellers who keep together too long, differed and parted, Gray returned speedily to England. The bard's biographers speak of this event more seriously than it deserves, and declare very emphatically that Walpole acknowledged himself in fault when they were afterwards reconciled. From what we know of the two men, the only wonder is that they found it agreeable to remain so long together. Walpole, with his gaiety and love of pleasure, could scarcely have proved a genial companion, for any length of time, to a man who viewed things with the seriousness of Gray and wished to make a study of every thing he saw. They are thought to be the first English travellers who visited the remains of Herculaneum, which were discovered a few days before they reached Naples.

It was the constitutional diffidence of Gray that in-

duced him to remark that he could perceive no medium between a public and private life. Upon this idea he habitually acted. He refused the laureateship; and although he accepted a professorship of history, never lectured.

It is quite characteristic that at a ball at Rome, which he describes in one of his letters, he retired to a corner and amused himself with looking on and eating ices, while his companions were absorbed in the dance. He never proposed to himself the honours of a poet. His verses were kept by him, frequently revised and at first only circulated in manuscript, and originally appeared in print without his intervention. Common cares overwhelmed him. His conscientiousness is also manifest throughout his correspondence. He suffered great self-reproach for every seeming neglect of duty, and cheerfully resigned a legacy to a relative poorer than himself.

The poetry of Gray is, like his life and character, correct, scholar-like and reflective. It is singularly free from all trace of impulse and fervour. Its most striking beauties are verbal, and the trait which mainly charms us is that of choice expression or elegance of diction. Art predominates in every line. There is little creative energy, little divine earnestness or exuberant fancy. All is chaste, appropriate and carefully elaborated. The point at which we recognise what is individual and therefore affecting in Gray's poems, is pathos. He did not possess that comprehensive sympathy essential to dramatic writing. The fragment of his tragedy, Agrippina, betrays a familiarity with classic models, and possesses a certain felicity of language, but beyond this promises little and was wisely abandoned. A large portion of his limited writings consist of translations from the *Latin, Norse and Welsh* poets; and his early taste, led *him to confine his* poetical efforts to the former language.

His English poems have little descriptive merit, and in the few attempts he made in the way of humour must be deemed unsuccessful. But when his muse obeyed the thoughtful and melancholy view which constituted the most genuine poetical phase of his mind, we are carried along by her solemn but pleasing strain and feel the true inspiration of pathos subdued in its expression by reflection and taste. "Gray," said Walpole, "was never a boy." His solitary vigils amid the philosophers and poets of antiquity, his recluse habits, his early bereavements, his thoughtful temper, all fitted him to muse and to moralise over the serious aspect of life. Yet his pathos is never obtrusive or forced, but flows with a native and winning beauty. Even in the simple epitaph he inscribed upon his mother's tomb we recognise this quiet yet none the less touching sadness that distinguishes his poetry:

"Here
Sleep the Remains
of
Dorothy Gray, Widow;
The careful, tender mother of many children;
One of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her."

The very subject of most of his verses indicates a philosophic sadness. The "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," is but the reminiscence of a man regretful of departed youth:

Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
Ah, fields *beloved in vain!*
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain!

How feelingly he anticipates the coming experience of the sporting boys!

*Alas!* regardless of their doom,
*The little* victims play;

No sense have they of ills to come;
No care beyond to-day:
Yet see how all around them wait
The ministers of human fate,
And black misfortune's baleful train!
Ah, show them where in ambush stand,
To seize their prey, the murth'rous band!
*And tell them they are men!*

His preference of quiet pleasures and the consolations of "a thinking mind self-occupied," is portrayed in the ode on Vicissitude:

Smiles on past misfortune's brow
Soft reflection's hand can trace;
And o'er the cheek of sorrow throw
A melancholy grace.
* * * * *

The hues of bliss more brightly glow
Chastis'd by sabler tints of wo;
And blended, form with artful strife,
The strength and harmony of life.
* * * * *

See the wretch, that long has tost
On the stormy bed of pain,
At length repair his vigour lost,
And breathe and walk again:

The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening paradise.
* * * * *

Humble quiet builds her cell
Near the source whence pleasure flows!
She eyes the clear crystalline well,
And tastes it as it goes.

There are but few bold and original ideas in the odes of Gray, notwithstanding their occasional beauty of expression. His allusion to Milton in the Progress of Poesy, is striking:

He passed the flaming bounds of place and time:
The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where angels tremble while they gaze
He saw; but, blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.

Perhaps the popularity of a line depends as much upon the happy choice of words as the ideas it conveys. The close of the following stanza which, as a whole is common-place enough, has passed into a proverb:

To each his sufferings; all are men,
Condemned alike to groan;
The tender for another's pain,
Th' unfeeling for his own.
Yet, ah! why should they know their fate,
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies?
Thought would destroy their paradise
No more;—*where ignorance is bliss,*
*'Tis folly to be wise.*

The same is true of the following fine image:

Hark, his hands the lyre explore!
Bright-eyed Fancy hovering o'er,
Scatters from her pictured urn
*Thoughts that breathe and words that burn.*

The beauties and deficiencies of Gray, both as a man and a poet, are traceable to his fastidious taste. This bounded his social nature, while it wove strong and pure ties between his mind and outward beauty. It rendered him too careful in his choice of intimates to give scope to that free cordiality of soul which distinguishes poets of deeper feeling. It made him pick his way too scrupulously through life, to ensure a broad and healthful experience. It fostered that pride which made him disavow reputation and utility, and wish to pass for "a gentleman *who read for his amusement.*" It restrained his muse by a *too exact discipline*, but at the same time polished and

refined into gems the little she vouchsafed to produce. It marked in fact all his habits and opinions. We see it in the neatness of his chirography, in the studied correctness of his familiar epistles, in the adjustment of his attire, the careful selection of his rhymes and epithets, the pains he took in superintending the musical adaptation of his ode, and the minute directions for his burial. Many, indeed, are the benefits resulting from a large organ of order, but there is such a thing in the progress of the intellect and the ordering of daily life, as being "more nice than wise," and in this regard chiefly does our poet seem to have erred. Of his harmless and studious life, time has fairly spared but one beautiful relic. His reputation as a scholar is like a tale that is told; his odes are quite neglected; but his "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," will bear his name gracefully down the tide of ages. It is one of the immortal poems of the language, and every year sees it renewed, illustrated, and more and more hallowed. It is perfectly characteristic of Gray. Almost every line is a select phrase not to be improved by taste or ingenuity. The subject is one of the happiest in the range of poetry. To roam through cities of the dead and muse over the humble names there chronicled, to ponder amid the tombs upon the mysteries of life, the varieties of earthly fortune, the strange lot which ordains that man should live and love, and then pass away and be remembered no more—this is no flight of fancy, but a train of thought and experience so near the universal mind, so suggestive to the heart, so familiar to the least meditative, that it appeals at once and with eloquence to all human beings.

We all love to speculate upon the injustice of destiny and the latent capacity of every man. We feel that *"chill penury" has* repressed the "noble rage" of many a *gifted spirit.* We cherish an instinctive faith in the un-

developed talent, the secret virtue, the obscure excellence of the millions who die and "make no sign." And who has not strayed at sunset into the quiet precincts of a country church-yard? Who has not sought the spot where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep?" Who has not felt a melancholy pleasure steal upon his soul, as he has stood among the graves and received the solemn teachings of the scene, "amid the lingering light?" The spirit of such reveries, the tone and hues of such a landscape, Gray has caught and enshrined forever in verse. The thoughts which compose the Elegy are not startling and new; not a line it contains but has been traced by learned criticism to some ancient or modern source, and scarcely a word has escaped question from those microscopic commentators who rejoice to pick flaws in whatever gem of art or literature charms the world. Gray's Elegy may, indeed, absolutely possess no higher claim to the reputation it enjoys than that of being an ingenious piece of mosaic; but wherever the materials were derived, the effect of the whole is too excellent to permit us to quarrel with the details. The very cadence of the stanza is attuned to elegiac music. It floats solemnly along like the moaning of the breeze in spring, amid the cypresses and willows. The hues of the picture are subdued to the "sober livery" of twilight. Tender sentiments—a regret made sublime by the sense of beauty—a recognition of death blended with a vague feeling of its mysterious revelations—the sweet quietude of evening—sad but soothing thoughts of "passing away"—the memory of the departed—all throng upon us in every verse of the Elegy, and associate the name of the gentle student of Cambridge, with ideas of contemplative delight.

# COLLINS.

ENTHUSIASTIC men delight to place themselves in direct relation with whatever interests their minds. The merely curious are satisfied to observe, to acquaint themselves with the remarkable points of any subject. Such is the difference between knowledge and sympathy, intellect and feeling, the philosopher and the poet. The former calmly inquires, and when the truth is elicited is content; the latter earnestly contemplates, till the sentiment of his theme warms and overflows his heart. The antiquarian is delighted when a half-legible inscription is plausibly conjectured or the age of an architectural fragment defined. The more ardent explorer of ruins, finds enjoyment in summoning back the men and events that hallow the scene; in musing, amid broken columns and mossy walls, over the wonders of human destiny and the poetry of time. This spontaneous interest, this sympathetic attraction is one of the characteristics of the genuine poet. He occupies toward congenial subjects of thought the relation of a lover. He kneels to win the veneration he seeks, he pleads for response to his impassioned regard, he boldly addresses the creature of his fancy, the idea of his mind, the object of his thought, finding relief and joy in the eloquent appeal. What we call personification is the natural language of ideal and *sincere minds.* It is a language which it is difficult to *counterfeit.* No resource of the poet and orator is less

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owed his education and all that was happy in the association of his childhood. He was an attached son and singularly blessed in one of his parents; and after her decease, never alluded to her without a sigh. West for eight years was bound to him not only by youthful attachment but congenial taste. Their correspondence is manly and confiding. When Gray's last letter to his friend was returned to him unopened, with the news of his death, he felt that one of his sweetest ties to life was broken. They had long communicated to each other the progress of their studies, submitting to each other's inspection their first attempts in verse, and seeking and finding mutual encouragement by strewing the pathway of early application with the flowers of friendship.

Gray paid a tribute to his friend in the following sonnet:

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And redd'ning Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
These can, alas! for other notes repine,
A different object do these eyes require:
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire.
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men:
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain:
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain.

West was a youth of rare promise. His early death and the subsequent loss of the poet's mother evidently colour the early efforts of Gray's muse. These bereave*ments narrowed* the already small circle of his sympa*thies. They led* him to regard the aims of the multi*tude with* more indifference than ever, and doubtless in-

duced the tone of distrust of life's promises which mark his best verses. The most buoyant era of Gray's existence, if we judge by his letters, was the period of his absence on the continent. He was fresh from his college studies when, at the invitation of his fellow-student and friend, Horace Walpole, he accompanied him to France and Italy. Every thing was novel and attractive to the mind of Gray. He mingled enough with society to gratify his curiosity. He was indefatigable in his study of the remains of antiquity and the fine arts. Among his papers were found notes, speculative as well as matter of fact, respecting the old masters and the customs of the ancients, which prove his discrimination and taste. His muse seems to have been first inspired by the rugged precipices, the rocky chasms and dark pines of the mountains where the convent of the Grand Chartense is situated. He dwells upon the romantic impressions he there derived, and wrote a Latin ode on the subject in the album of the monks. After the two friends, like most fellow-travellers who keep together too long, differed and parted, Gray returned speedily to England. The bard's biographers speak of this event more seriously than it deserves, and declare very emphatically that Walpole acknowledged himself in fault when they were afterwards reconciled. From what we know of the two men, the only wonder is that they found it agreeable to remain so long together. Walpole, with his gaiety and love of pleasure, could scarcely have proved a genial companion, for any length of time, to a man who viewed things with the seriousness of Gray and wished to make a study of every thing he saw. They are thought to be the first English travellers who visited the remains of Herculaneum, which were discovered a few days before they reached Naples.

It was the constitutional diffidence of Gray that in-

duced him to remark that he could perceive no medium between a public and private life. Upon this idea he habitually acted. He refused the laureateship; and although he accepted a professorship of history, never lectured.

It is quite characteristic that at a ball at Rome, which he describes in one of his letters, he retired to a corner and amused himself with looking on and eating ices, while his companions were absorbed in the dance. He never proposed to himself the honours of a poet. His verses were kept by him, frequently revised and at first only circulated in manuscript, and originally appeared in print without his intervention. Common cares overwhelmed him. His conscientiousness is also manifest throughout his correspondence. He suffered great self-reproach for every seeming neglect of duty, and cheerfully resigned a legacy to a relative poorer than himself.

The poetry of Gray is, like his life and character, correct, scholar-like and reflective. It is singularly free from all trace of impulse and fervour. Its most striking beauties are verbal, and the trait which mainly charms us is that of choice expression or elegance of diction. Art predominates in every line. There is little creative energy, little divine earnestness or exuberant fancy. All is chaste, appropriate and carefully elaborated. The point at which we recognise what is individual and therefore affecting in Gray's poems, is pathos. He did not possess that comprehensive sympathy essential to dramatic writing. The fragment of his tragedy, Agrippina, betrays a familiarity with classic models, and possesses a certain felicity of language, but beyond this promises little and was wisely abandoned. A large portion of his limited writings consist of translations from the *Latin, Norse and* Welsh poets; and his early taste, led *him to confine his* poetical efforts to the former language.

His English poems have little descriptive merit, and in the few attempts he made in the way of humour must be deemed unsuccessful. But when his muse obeyed the thoughtful and melancholy view which constituted the most genuine poetical phase of his mind, we are carried along by her solemn but pleasing strain and feel the true inspiration of pathos subdued in its expression by reflection and taste. "Gray," said Walpole, "was never a boy." His solitary vigils amid the philosophers and poets of antiquity, his recluse habits, his early bereavements, his thoughtful temper, all fitted him to muse and to moralise over the serious aspect of life. Yet his pathos is never obtrusive or forced, but flows with a native and winning beauty. Even in the simple epitaph he inscribed upon his mother's tomb we recognise this quiet yet none the less touching sadness that distinguishes his poetry:

"Here
Sleep the Remains
of
Dorothy Gray, Widow;
The careful, tender mother of many children;
One of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her."

The very subject of most of his verses indicates a philosophic sadness. The "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," is but the reminiscence of a man regretful of departed youth:

Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
Ah, fields *beloved in vain!*
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain!

How feelingly he anticipates the coming experience of the sporting boys!

*Alas!* regardless of their doom,
*The little* victims play;

No sense have they of ills to come;
No care beyond to-day:
Yet see how all around them wait
The ministers of human fate,
And black misfortune's baleful train!
Ah, show them where in ambush stand,
To seize their prey, the murth'rous band!
*And tell them they are men!*

His preference of quiet pleasures and the consolations of "a thinking mind self-occupied," is portrayed in the ode on Vicissitude:

Smiles on past misfortune's brow
Soft reflection's hand can trace;
And o'er the cheek of sorrow throw
A melancholy grace.
* * * * *

The hues of bliss more brightly glow
Chastis'd by sabler tints of wo;
And blended, form with artful strife,
The strength and harmony of life.
* * * * *

See the wretch, that long has tost
On the stormy bed of pain,
At length repair his vigour lost,
And breathe and walk again:

The meanest floweret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening paradise.
* * * * *

Humble quiet builds her cell
Near the source whence pleasure flows!
She eyes the clear crystalline well,
And tastes it as it goes.

There are but few bold and original ideas in the odes of Gray, notwithstanding their occasional beauty of expression. His allusion to Milton in the Progress of Poesy, is striking:

He passed the flaming bounds of place and time:
The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where angels tremble while they gaze
He saw; but, blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.

Perhaps the popularity of a line depends as much upon the happy choice of words as the ideas it conveys. The close of the following stanza which, as a whole is common-place enough, has passed into a proverb:

To each his sufferings; all are men,
Condemned alike to groan;
The tender for another's pain,
Th' unfeeling for his own.
Yet, ah! why should they know their fate,
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies?
Thought would destroy their paradise
No more;—*where ignorance is bliss,*
*'Tis folly to be wise.*

The same is true of the following fine image:

Hark, his hands the lyre explore!
Bright-eyed Fancy hovering o'er,
Scatters from her pictured urn
*Thoughts that breathe and words that burn.*

The beauties and deficiencies of Gray, both as a man and a poet, are traceable to his fastidious taste. This bounded his social nature, while it wove strong and pure ties between his mind and outward beauty. It rendered him too careful in his choice of intimates to give scope to that free cordiality of soul which distinguishes poets of deeper feeling. It made him pick his way too scrupulously through life, to ensure a broad and healthful experience. It fostered that pride which made him disavow reputation and utility, and wish to pass for "a gentleman who *read for his amusement.*" It restrained his muse by a *too exact discipline*, but at the same time polished and

refined into gems the little she vouchsafed to produce. It marked in fact all his habits and opinions. We see it in the neatness of his chirography, in the studied correctness of his familiar epistles, in the adjustment of his attire, the careful selection of his rhymes and epithets, the pains he took in superintending the musical adaptation of his ode, and the minute directions for his burial. Many, indeed, are the benefits resulting from a large organ of order, but there is such a thing in the progress of the intellect and the ordering of daily life, as being "more nice than wise," and in this regard chiefly does our poet seem to have erred. Of his harmless and studious life, time has fairly spared but one beautiful relic. His reputation as a scholar is like a tale that is told; his odes are quite neglected; but his "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," will bear his name gracefully down the tide of ages. It is one of the immortal poems of the language, and every year sees it renewed, illustrated, and more and more hallowed. It is perfectly characteristic of Gray. Almost every line is a select phrase not to be improved by taste or ingenuity. The subject is one of the happiest in the range of poetry. To roam through cities of the dead and muse over the humble names there chronicled, to ponder amid the tombs upon the mysteries of life, the varieties of earthly fortune, the strange lot which ordains that man should live and love, and then pass away and be remembered no more—this is no flight of fancy, but a train of thought and experience so near the universal mind, so suggestive to the heart, so familiar to the least meditative, that it appeals at once and with eloquence to all human beings.

We all love to speculate upon the injustice of destiny and the latent capacity of every man. We feel that *"chill penury" has* repressed the "noble rage" of many *a gifted spirit.* We cherish an instinctive faith in the un-

developed talent, the secret virtue, the obscure excellence of the millions who die and "make no sign." And who has not strayed at sunset into the quiet precincts of a country church-yard? Who has not sought the spot where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep?" Who has not felt a melancholy pleasure steal upon his soul, as he has stood among the graves and received the solemn teachings of the scene, "amid the lingering light?" The spirit of such reveries, the tone and hues of such a landscape, Gray has caught and enshrined forever in verse. The thoughts which compose the Elegy are not startling and new; not a line it contains but has been traced by learned criticism to some ancient or modern source, and scarcely a word has escaped question from those microscopic commentators who rejoice to pick flaws in whatever gem of art or literature charms the world. Gray's Elegy may, indeed, absolutely possess no higher claim to the reputation it enjoys than that of being an ingenious piece of mosaic; but wherever the materials were derived, the effect of the whole is too excellent to permit us to quarrel with the details. The very cadence of the stanza is attuned to elegiac music. It floats solemnly along like the moaning of the breeze in spring, amid the cypresses and willows. The hues of the picture are subdued to the "sober livery" of twilight. Tender sentiments—a regret made sublime by the sense of beauty—a recognition of death blended with a vague feeling of its mysterious revelations—the sweet quietude of evening—sad but soothing thoughts of "passing away"—the memory of the departed—all throng upon us in every verse of the Elegy, and associate the name of the gentle student of Cambridge, with ideas of contemplative delight.

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Moor's apostrophe to Patience, "that young and rose-lipped cherubim," and Macbeth's address to the airy dagger. When feeling is wrought up to a certain point, its language is poetic. We then forget the conventional and grapple with the one overmastering idea. Such is the case in actual experience; and so the poet, when by earnest contemplation his sympathies are all enlisted in a subject, turns the whole force of his mind in that direction, expands his nature to drink in its suggestions as a flower opens to the sun and pours forth upon it the concentrated flow of thought, as a pilgrim at his long-sought shrine or a lover at the feet of his mistress. Of the English poets whose sensibility and ardour of thought have led them successfully to personify their themes, William Collins takes a high rank. He is the acknowledged author of one of the few immortal odes of the language. His life was clouded with disappointment. He failed in obtaining a fellowship, after a promising college career; and this circumstance, together with pecuniary embarrassments, led him to quit the university for London, and embark in the precarious pursuits of literary adventure. Irresolute and visionary, he projected grand schemes which were often never seriously commenced and in no case fully realized. Some critics charge the failure of these designs wholly to the poet's indolence, without considering how difficult regular mental occupation must be to a sensitive man harassed by poverty, watched by bailiffs, and in daily anxiety for the means of subsistence. His eyes were so weak that blindness was apprehended. It was his misfortune to love in vain, and when affections such as his served "to water but the desert," the apathy he manifested in regard to his plans of research, must have been confirmed. His odes were so neglected at their first appearance, that with indignant warmth he burned the balance of the edition.

He was early separated from his immediate family, and the only relative with whom he maintained intercourse was a sister who possessed not a single trait of character in common with him, evinced no interest in his pursuits and scorned his generous impulses. When at last fortune smiled upon Collins, and the bequest of an uncle placed him above want, the brilliant faculties which had been his consolation and sustained his self-respect, began to fail. Change of scene produced no amendment, and the gifted and susceptible bard became a lunatic. His malady seems to have alternated for several years between violence and melancholy; sometimes there were lucid intervals, when he rallied his disordered powers; at others his imbecility or insane ravings terrified all about him.

In the cathedral of Chichester is a monument, by Flaxman, representing the unfortunate poet in a reclining posture, the New Testament open before him, his lyre and one of his compositions neglected at his feet, his expression calm and benevolent, and on the pediment are carved the effigies of Love and Pity. It must be soothing to gaze upon these peaceful emblems and remember how often the adjacent cloisters have echoed with the frantic cries of one who is now slumbering so quietly. From the few facts recorded of Collins, it is evident that he was a man of keen sensibility and a glowing mind. He seems to have charmed all who knew him, and most of his intimates were men distinguished for talent. His sympathies were broad and earnest, such as win love and inspire confidence. He was the endeared companion of Thomson and Garrick, Dr. Armstrong and Hill. Even Johnson, little as he appreciated his verses, evidently felt the graces of his character. Indeed, in some of the letters of the moralist, there are expressions of *tender concern in behalf* of Collins which indicate the *rare estimation in which* he was held. The social spirit

of the poet, his warm friendship, his passion for Shakspere and music, are so many evidences of his sanguine temper and native sentiment. His soul was like a finely strung harp, too rudely exposed long to retain its harmonious tone. Yet every breeze that swept its strings drew forth melody; and ere it was jarred into discord a few strains were happily elicited, which still abide to cheer our hearts, and with their pensive music vindicate the rare worth of the departed.

The poetic fire of Collins was concentrated in its development. He attempted no extensive range. He went not forth to chronicle the details of nature. We find no elaborate pictures, no subtle and refined comments on external things or human life, but an intense revelation, a concise view, a bright glimpse caught from the fervour of the poet's thought. His eclogues and heroic poems may be considered as the early experiments rather than the legitimate fruits of his genius. They show command of language and taste but no strong individual traits. In the odes, although they are unequal in felicious expression, the peculiar force of Collins appears. By a single epithet, a graphic apostrophe, an image freshly springing from his ardent mind, we often receive an impression more vivid and pleasing than other bards convey by a succession of laboured metaphors and rhymes. The description of danger is well known as an instance, in point:

> Danger whose limbs of giant mould
> What mortal eye can fixed behold?
> Who stalks his round, a hideous form
> Howling amidst the midnight storm;
> *Or throws him on the ridgy steep,*
> *Of some loose, hanging rock to sleep.*

He tells us that simplicity is

> —— *by Nature taught*
> *To breathe her genuine thought,*
> *In numbers warmly pure and sweetly strong.*

Here we have a perfect definition in common but adequate words. And the idea is carried out most pleasingly by such phrases as "hermit heart," "decent maiden" and "sister meek of truth." This delicate propriety of language is characteristic of Collins, and enables him to venture upon figures which a less chaste poet would urge into extravagance. How the imagination is filled and charmed by two images of one of his most famous odes:

> When spring with dewy fingers cold
> Returns to deck their hallowed mould.
> * * * *
> There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,
> To bless the turf that wraps their clay.

Who has not envied the sleep of the brave thus guarded and graced? Who has not been thrilled at the idea of beautiful spring "with dewy fingers cold" lingering over the hero's grave, and seen in fancy the august image of that gray pilgrim invoking a benediction upon the consecrated spot? In the twelve lines of this ode there is a world of meaning. The fancy and the heart are deeply impressed, and yet how simple the diction and unpretending the design. Mercy is characterized with the same felicity of metaphor and epithet:

> Oh thou, who sitt'st a smiling bride,
> By Valour's arm'd and awful side,
> Gentlest of sky-born forms and best adored.

Subsequently she is represented as *looking away* rage, the most touching manner in which we can imagine her power to be exerted. A constant tendency to personify appears throughout the poetry of Collins. In his ode on the death of Colonel Ross, we have again the image of Honour slightly varied:

> Blest *youth*, regardful of thy doom,
> *Ærial hands* shall build thy tomb,
> *With* shadowy trophies crown'd;

Whil'st Honour bathed in tears shall rove
To sigh thy name through every grove,
And call his heroes round.

What bold images follow:

The warlike dead of every age,
Who fill the fair recording page,
Shall leave their sainted rest;
And half-reclining on his spear,
Each wandering chief by turns appear
To hail the blooming guest.

But lo, where sunk in deep despair,
Her garments torn, her bosom bare,
Impatient Freedom lies!
Her matted tresses madly spread,
To every sod which wraps the dead,
She turns her joyless eyes.

This spirited ode was written to commemorate the death of the poet's rival, who was affianced to the lady of his heart at the time of his decease. One of the few jokes related of Collins has reference to his unfortunate love. He was born within a few hours of his unkind mistress, and used to remark facetiously that he came into the world "the day after the fair." Few poets more successfully give us the sensation of a scene or an event than Collins. In his ode to Evening, he speaks of the beetle's "small but sullen horn," the "heedless hum," the "folding-star," and "the pensive pleasures" that "prepare the shadowy car," "hamlets brown," "dim-discovered spies" and "the gradual dusky veil—" expressions which make us almost sensibly feel the coming on of the twilight. It is a fine idea that Peace should be invoked, as in the following stanza, to unite herself with the only principle that makes her existence consistent with national dignity:

*Let others* court thy transient smile,
*But come to* grace thy western isle,

By warlike honour led;
And, while around her ports rejoice,
While all her sons adore thy choice,
With him forever wed!

The faith Collins placed in native inspiration as the source of poetry rather than art or study, is suggested by this invocation:

O Nature! boon from whence proceed,
Each forceful thought, each prompted deed;
If but from thee I hope to feel
On all my heart imprint thy seal!
Let some retreating cynic find
Those oft-turned scrolls I leave behind;
The sports and I this hour agree
To roam thy scene-ful world with thee.

In the attempt to appreciate the elements of genius, we should select the most complete specimen. Expression is at all times a difficult process and the most fluent poet often fails to give utterance to what is glowing in his mind. The fairest example of the poetry of Collins is his celebrated Ode on the Passions. Observation alone could not have gifted him so to describe as in this masterpiece of verse. The heart that prompted this picture must have known, in its own delicate and earnest workings, the mysterious fluctuation so vividly sketched. Rare sympathy with human nature revealed these striking touches. Briefly as each passion is depicted, the key-note is struck which at once suggests what is left unsaid. How impressively the metrical harmony accords with the feelings portrayed. It was unnecessary to adapt this ode to music; the very numbers are melodiously expressive. What speaking figures of speech are those which make Fear strike the lyre with "one rude crash," and then recoil at a sound of its own creation; *Despair call forth* a strain alternately sad and wild;

Hope appear with "eyes so fair," and awaken echo so typical of her own illusions; Jealousy, with no fixed cadence, restless and variable as its own perplexed mood; melancholy's notes "by distance made more sweet" and dying away "in hollow murmurs;" Cheerfulness with "buskin gemmed with morning dew" beguiling forth "brown exercise" and "sylvan boys peeping from their alleys green" and Mirth shaking "a thousand odours from her dewy wings!" In this one production how much of the essence of true poetry is concentrated. How it sets at nought the superficial criticism of Dr. Johnson. How eloquently does it suggest the depth of feeling, the susceptibility and the beautiful insight which distinguished the genius of Collins. If this gem was not originally recognised at its true value, later times have made amends for previous neglect. An adept in the art of elocution can give a pathos, and vividness to this ode of which few English poems are capable. Its variety is admirable, its imagery bold and glowing, and the whole conception warm with the imaginative beauty of a poet's mind. It has made dear the name of Collins, and hallowed the memory of his sufferings, by associating them with the sacred legacy of genius.

# POPE.

THAT system of compensation which is thought by many to balance the apparent inequalities of human destiny, is strikingly illustrated in the case of Alexander Pope. Born in obscurity, he achieved a great reputation, extremely feeble in frame, his mind was singularly energetic, cut off by deformity from many accomplishments, he gave to his intellectual efforts an unrivalled elegance. Who would have imagined, in contemplating the delicate and misshapen child, that life, by any possibility, could prove any thing to him but a weary experience, whose monotony would be totally unrelieved? Yet glance at the adventures of his poetical career, and in number and variety they will be found equal to those of many a hale knight or wild votary of fashion. At what a tender age he renounced the dictation of masters, assumed the reins of education, and resolutely launched into the profession of a poet! How soon he was engaged in a quarrel with Ambrose Phillips, and what a long satirical contest ensued with Dennis and Cibber! Then followed his intimacy with Lady Montague; their fierce encounters of wit; their friendship, correspondence, and mutual enmity. These and similar scenes of literary animosity, were brightened by friendly intercourse with Gay, Swift, and Bolingbroke, and relieved by long periods of study and *composition, visits to* noblemen, short journeys, and *domestic duties*. And thus the weak and diminutive poet

managed to rise above the dull existence his organization seemed to ensure, and to find abundance of interest in the excitement of critical warfare and the pursuit of poetical renown. It is a wonderful evidence of the power of mind, that this blighted germ of humanity—who was braced in canvass in order to hold himself upright—put to bed and undressed all his life like a child—often unable to digest the luxuries he could not deny himself, or to keep his eyes open at the honourable tables to which his talents alone gave him access—should yet be the terror of his foes, the envy of his rivals, and the admiration of his friends. He could not manage the sword he so ostentatiously displayed in society, but he wielded a pen whose caustic satire was amply adequate to minister either to his self-defence or revenge. He was 'sent into this breathing world but half made up,' and calls his existence 'a long disease;' but nature atoned for the unkindness, by endowing him with a judgment marvellous for its refined correctness. He could not enjoy with his neighbours the healthful exercises of the chase; but while they were pursuing a poor hare, with whose death ended the sport, his mind was borne along in a race of rhyme destined to carry his name with honour to posterity. He never laughed heartily; but while weaving his heroics, forgot pain, weariness and the world. In the street, he was an object of pity—at his desk, a king. His head was early deprived of hair, and ached severely almost every day of his life; but his eyes were singularly expressive, and his voice uncommonly melodious. In youth he suffered the decrepitude of age, but at the same time gave evidence of mental precocity and superior sense. He was unequal to a personal rencontre with those who ridiculed *his works;* but he has bestowed upon them an immortal *vengeance in the* Dunciad. His unfortunate person shut *him out from* the triumphs of gallantry, but his talents

and reputation long secured him the society and professed friendship of the most brilliant woman of the day; and obtained for him, during most of his life, the faithful care and companionship of Martha Blount. He never knew the buoyancy of spirit which good health induces, but was very familiar with that keen delight that springs from successful mental enterprise. He could not command the consideration attached to noble birth; but, on the strength of his intellectual endowments, he was always privileged to tax the patience of his titled acquaintance for his own convenience and pleasure.

Men of letters have been called a race of creatures of a nature between the two sexes. Pope is a remarkable exemplification of the idea. There is a tone of decided manliness in the strong sense which characterizes his productions, and a truly masculine vigour in the patient application with which he opposed physical debility. His disposition on the other hand was morbidly vain. He was weak enough to indulge an ambition for distinguished acquaintance, and a most effeminate caprice swayed his attachments and enmities. Another prominent trait increased his resemblance to the female sex. I allude to a quality which the phrenologists call secretiveness. In its healthy exercise its operation is invaluable. To its influence is ascribed much of that address and tact, in which women are so superior to men. The latter, in ordinary affairs, generally adopt a very direct course. They confide in strength rather than policy. They overlook lesser means in the contemplation of larger ends. This, indeed, is partly owing to their position. Nature always gives additional resources where the relation is that of the pursued rather than the pursuer. Hence, the insight into character, the talent for observation, the skill in tracing motives and anticipating results, which belong to women. It is the abuse, however, of this trait that is obvi-

ous in Pope. There seems little question that he was an artful man. He made use of the most unnecessary stratagems to compass a simple favour. His cunning, indeed, was chiefly directed to the acquisition of fame; but nothing subtracts more from our sense of reputation, than a conviction that it is an exclusive end to its possessor. Truly great men never trouble themselves about their fame. They press bravely on in the path of honour and leave their renown to take care of itself. It succeeds as certainly as any law of nature. All elevated spirits have a calm confidence in this truth. Washington felt it in the darkest hour of the revolution, and Shakspere unconsciously realized it, when he concluded his last play, and went quietly down to finish his days in the country.

Pope was a gifted mortal, but he was not of this *calibre*. He thought a great deal about his reputation. He was not satisfied merely to labour for it, and leave the result He disputed its possession inch by inch with the critics, and resorted to a thousand petty tricks to secure its enjoyment. The management he displayed in order to publish his letters, is an instance in point. No one can read them without feeling they were written for more eyes than those of his correspondents. There is a laboured smartness, a constant exhibition of fine sentiment, which is strained and unnatural. His repeated deprecation of motives of aggrandizement, argues, 'a thinking too precisely' on the very subject; and no man, whose chief ambition was to gain a few dear friends, would so habitually proclaim it. These tender and delicate aspirations live in the secret places of the heart. They are breathed in lonely prayers, and uttered chiefly in quiet sighs. Scarcely do they obtain natural expression amid the details of a *literary correspondence*. True sentiment is modest. It *may tinge the* conversation and give a feeling tone to the *epistle, but it* makes not a confessional of every sentry-

box, or gallery. The letters of Pope leave upon the mind an impression of affectation. Doubtless they contain much that is sincere in sentiment and candid in opinion, but the general effect lacks the freedom and heartiness of genuine letter-writing. Many of the bard's foibles should be ascribed to his bodily ailments, and the indulgence which he always commanded. Nor should we forget that he proved himself above literary servility—and was, in many instances, a most faithful friend, and always an exemplary son. Pope was the poet of wit and fancy, rather than of enthusiasm and imagination. His invention is often brilliant, but never grand. He rarely excites any sentiment of sublimity, but often one of pleasure. There is little in his poetry that seems the offspring of emotion. He never appears to have written from overpowering impulse. His finest verses have an air of premeditation. We are not swept away by a torrent of individual passion as in Byron, nor melted by a natural sentiment as in Burns, nor exalted by a grandeur of imagery as in Milton. We read Pope with a regular pulse. He often provokes a smile, but never calls forth a tear. His rationality appproves itself to our understanding, his fancifulness excites our applause ; but the citadel of the soul is uninvaded, We perceive, unawares perhaps, that books have quickened the bard's conception far more than experience. It may be fairly doubted whether Pope possessed, in any great degree, the true political sensibility to Nature. He thought more of his own domains than becomes a true son o the muse, and had a most unpoetical regard for money, as well as contempt for poverty. His favourite objects of contemplation were Alexander Pope and Twickenham. We cannot wonder that he failed as an editor of Shakspere. Few objects or *scenes of the outward* world awoke feelings in his bosom *"too deep for tears."* He never claimed such fellowship

with the elements as to fancy himself 'a portion of the tempest.' It is true he describes well; but where the materials of his pictures are not borrowed, they resemble authentic nomenclatures more than genial sketches. He does not personify nature with the ardour of a votary. He never follows with a lover's perception the phases of a natural phenomenon. The evening wind might have cooled his brow forever, ere he would have been prompted to trace its course with the grateful fondness of Bryant. He might have lived upon the sea-coast, and never revelled in its grandeur as did the Peer, and passed a daisy every day, nor felt the meek appeal of its lowly beauty, as did the Ploughman. Even in his letters, Pope depicts scenery with a very cool admiration; and never seems to associate it with any sentiment of moral interest. Where any thing of this appears, it is borrowed. The taste of Pope was evidently artificial to the last degree. He delighted in a grotto decked out with looking-glass and coloured stones, as much as Wordsworth in a mountain-path, or Scott in a border antiquity. The Rape of the Lock is considered his most characteristic production, and abounds with brilliant fancy and striking invention. But to what is it devoted? The celebration of a trivial incident in fashionable life. Its inspiration is not of the grove, but the boudoir. It is not bright with the radiance of truth, but with the polish of art. It breathes not the fragrance of wild-flowers, but the fumes of tea. It displays not the simple features of nature, but the paraphernalia of the toilet. We know what the heroine wears and what she does, but must conjecture her peculiar sentiments, and make out of the details of her dress and circumstances, an idea of her character.

> *On her white breast, a sparkling cross she wore,*
> *Which Jews might kiss and infidels adore.*

Faultless lines indeed, and they ring most harmoniously; but the poet of feeling would have thrilled us with his description of Belinda's charms, and the poet of imagination would have carried us beneath both the cross and the bosom it adorned, to the young heart of the maiden, and made us 'leap on its pants triumphant.' Yet this poem is an extraordinary proof of Pope's fancy. He has invented a long story out of a single and not very interesting fact; and he has told this tale in a language the most choice, and rhymes the most correct. The poem is like the fruits and flowers of precious stones set in the exquisite *pietra dura* tables of Italy,—clear, fanciful, rarely combined, but unwarmed with any glow of nature; and better calculated to awaken admiration than excite sympathy.

It is usual to speak of Pope as a poet of the past—one whose peculiarities have given place to a new order of things. But we have ever representatives of his school, both in literature and life. Men who have cultivated their manners to an elegant degree of plausibility, orators who have become masters of an engaging elocution, the grace of which wins us from criticism and reflection, poets who have perfectly learned how to versify, and have more sense than sensibility, more wit than enthusiasm, more fancy than imaginative power;—such are legitimate disciples of Pope. They are useful, attractive, often delightful beings, and effect much in their way; but humanity can be 'touched to finer issues' than these conventional though brilliant accomplishments. The truthful aspirant, the mind elevated by great views and aims, the spontaneous and overflowing soul—such spirits as Milton, Burns, Coleridge, and Lamb, awaken a profounder regard. The Essay on Man contains many truisms, a long array of common-place facts, and a few interesting truths. The theory it unfolds whether the poet's or borrowed, affords

little consolation to an ardent and sensitive mind. Pope cherished no very tender or comprehensive views of his race. His observation enabled him only to 'catch the manners living as they rise;' and accordingly many of his couplets have passed into proverbs. He inquires

> 'of God above, or man below,
> What can we reason, but from what we know?'

A curious query for a poet whose distinction it is to enjoy the insight of a generous imagination, and whose keen sympathies take him constantly from the narrow limits of the actual, soften the angles of mere logical perception, and 'round them with a sleep'—the sweet and dreamy repose of poetical reverie. Pope sings not of

> Hopes and fears that kindle hope,
> An undistinguishable throng,
> And gentle wishes long subdued,
> Subdued and cherished long.

The Epistle to Abelard breathes, indeed, the tremulous faith of love, and paints, not uneffectively, the struggle of that passion in a vestal's heart, but the bard himself refers us to the original letter for the sentiment of the poem. Even the pious invocation of 'The Dying Christian to his Soul,' was written with a view to other effusions of a similar nature. The Translations and Imitations of Pope, greatly outweigh his original pieces—a sufficient proof that poetry was to him more of an art than an impulse. The Iliad, however little it may credit his scholarship and fidelity to the original, is truly an extraordinary evidence of his facility in versifying, and of his patient industry. Pope's ideal lay almost wholly in language. He thought that

> 'True expression like the unchanging sun,
> Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon,
> It gilds all objects, but it alters none.'

To him we are mainly indebted for a new revelation of the capabilities of English heroic verse. He gave the most striking examples of his favourite theory, that 'sound should seem an echo to the sense.' He carried out the improvement in diction which Dryden commenced; and while Addison was producing beautiful specimens of reformed prose, Pope gave a polish and point to verse before unknown. When the vast number of his couplets are considered, their fastidious correctness is truly astonishing. How many examples occur to the memory of his correct and musical rhymes, ringing like the clear chimes of a favourite bell through a frosty atmosphere! How often do we forget the poverty of the thought—the familiarity of the image—the triteness of the truths they convey, in the fascinating precision of the verse! It becomes, indeed, wearisome at length from sameness; and to be truly enjoyed must be only resorted to occasionally. The poetical diction of Pope resembles mosaic-work. His words, like the materials of that art, are fitted together with a marvellous nicety. The pictures formed are vivid, exact, and skilful. The consummate tact thus displayed charms the fancy, and suggests a degree of patient and tasteful labour which excites admiration. The best mosaic paintings have a fresh vivacity of hue, and a distinctness of outline, which gratifies the eye; but we yield a higher tribute to the less formal and more spiritual products of the pencil. And such is the distinction between Pope and more imaginative poets. The bright enamel of his rhymes, is like a frozen lake over which we glide, as a skater before the wind, surrounded by a glittering landscape of snow. There is a pleasing exhilaration in our course, but little glow of heart or exultation of soul. The poetry of a deeper and *less artificial school is* like that lake on a summer evening, upon whose tide we float in a pleasure-boat, look-

ing upon the flowering banks, the warm sunset, and the coming forth of the stars. To appreciate justly the perfection to which Pope carried the heroic verse, it is only necessary to consider how few subsequent rhymers have equalled him. He created a standard in this department which is not likely soon to be superseded. Other and less studied metres have since come into vogue, but this still occupies and must retain an important place. It is doubtless the best for an occasional poem intended for oral delivery. Few can manage the Spenserian stanza with effect, and blank verse often wearies an audience. There is a directness in the heroic metre admirably adapted for immediate impression. The thought is converged to bright sallies within its brief limits, and the quickly succeeding rhymes sweeten the sentiment to the ear. Finely chosen words are very effective in the heroic measure, and images have a striking relievo. For bold appeal, and keen satire, this medium is unsurpassed; and it is equally susceptible of touching melody. Witness Byron's description of the dead Medora, and Campbell's protest against scepticism. Rogers and our own Sprague have won their fairest laurels in heroic verse. With this school of poetry, Pope is wholly identified. He most signally exhibited its resources, and to him is justly ascribable the honour of having made it the occasion of refining the English language. He illustrates the power of correctness—the effect of precision. His example has done much to put to shame careless habits of expression. He was a metrical essayist of excellent sense, rare fancy, and bright wit. He is the apostle of legitimate rhyme, and one of the true masters of the art of verse.

# COWPER.

In the gallery of the English poets, we linger with peculiar emotion before the portrait of Cowper. We think of him as a youth, 'giggling and making giggle' at his uncle's house in London, and indulging an attachment destined to be sadly disappointed; made wretched by the idea of a peculiar destiny; transferred from a circle of literary roysterers to the gloomy precincts of an Insane Asylum; partially restored, yet shrinking from the responsibilities incident to his age; restless, undecided, despondent even to suicidal wretchedness, and finally abandoning a world for the excitement and struggles of which he was wholly unfit. We follow him into the bosom of a devoted family; witness with admiration the facility he exhibits in deriving amusements from trifling employments—gathering every way-side flower even in the valley of despair, finding no comfort but in 'self-deception,' and finding this in 'self-discipline.' We behold his singular re-appearance in the world in the capacity of an author,—genius reviving the ties that misfortune had broken. We trace with delight his intellectual career in his charming correspondence with Hayley, Hill, and his cousin, the vividness of his affections in his poem to his mother's picture, the play of his fancy in *John Gilpin, his reflective* ingenuity in the Task. We *recall the closing* scene—the failing faculties of his faith-

ful companion,* his removal from endeared scenes, his sad walks by the sea-shore, his patient, but profound melancholy and peaceful death—with the solemn relief that ensues from the termination of a tragedy. And when we are told that an expression of "holy surprise" settled on the face of the departed, we are tempted to exclaim with honest Kent—

> O, let him pass! he hates him
> That would upon the rack of this rude world,
> Stretch him out longer.

At an age when most of his countrymen are confirmed in prosaic habits, William Cowper sat down to versify. No darling theory of the art, no restless thirst for fame, no bardic frenzy prompted his devotion. He sought in poetic labour oblivion of consciousness. He strove to make a Lethé of the waters of Helicon. The gift of a beautiful mind was marred by an unhappy temperament; the chords of a tender heart proved too delicate for the winds of life; and the unfortunate youth became an intellectual hypochondriac. In early manhood, when the first cloud of insanity had dispersed, he took, as it were, monastic vows—and turned aside from the busy metropolis, where his career began, to seek the solace of rural retirement. There, the tasteful care of a conservatory, the exercise of mechanical ingenuity, repose, seclusion and kindness, gradually restored his spirit to calmness; and then the intellect demanded exercise, and this it found in the service of the muse. Few of her votaries afford a more touching instance of suffering than the bard of Olney. In the records of mental disease, his case has a melancholy prominence—not that it is wholly isolated,

> * Thy indistinct expressions seem
> *Like language* uttered in a dream,
> *Yet me they* charm, whate'er their theme,
> My Mary.

but because the patient tells his own story, and hallows the memory of his griefs by uniform gentleness of soul and engaging graces of mind. To account for the misery of Cowper, is not so important as to receive and act upon the lesson it conveys. His history is an ever-eloquent appeal in behalf of those, whose delicate organisation and sensitive temper expose them to moral anguish. Whether his gloom is ascribable to a state of the brain as physiologists maintain, to the ministry of spirits as is argued by the Swedenborgians, or to the influence of a creed as sectarians declare, is a matter of no comparative moment—since there is no doubt the germs of insanity existed in his very constitution. "I cannot bear much thinking," he says. "The meshes of the brain are composed of such mere spinner's threads in me, that when a long thought finds its way into them, it buzzes and twangs and bustles about at such a rate as seems to threaten the whole contexture." Recent discoveries have proved that there is more physiological truth in this remark, than the unhappy poet could ever have suspected. The ideas about which his despair gathered, were probably accidental. His melancholy naturally was referred to certain external causes, but its true origin is to be sought among the mysteries of our nature. The avenues of joy were closed in his heart. He tells us, a sportive thought startled him. "It is as if a harlequin should intrude himself into the gloomy chamber where a corpse is deposited." In reading his productions, with a sense of his mental condition, what a mingling of human dignity and woe is present to the imagination! A mind evolving the most rational and virtuous conceptions, yet itself the prey of absurd delusions; a heart overflowing with the truest sympathy for a sick hare, *yet pained* at the idea of the church-honours *paid to Handel;* a soul gratefully recognizing the be-

nignity of God, in the fresh verdure of the myrtle, and the mutual attachment of doves, and yet incredulous of his care for its own eternal destiny! What a striking incongruity between the thoughtful man, expatiating in graceful numbers upon the laws of Nature and the claims of Religion, and the poor mortal deferring to an ignorant school-master, and "hunted by spiritual hounds in the night-season;" the devout poet celebrating his Maker's glory, and the madman trembling at the waxing moon; the affectionate friend, patient and devoted, and the timid devotee deprecating the displeasure of a clergyman, who reproved his limited and harmless pleasures!

It has been objected to Hamlet, that the sportiveness of the prince mars the effect of his thoughtfulness. It is natural when the mind is haunted and oppressed by any painful idea which it is necessary to conceal, to seek relief, and at the same time increase the deception, by a kind of playfulness. This is exemplified in Cowper's letters. "Such thoughts," he says, "as pass through my head when I am not writing, make the subject of my letters to you." One overwhelming thought, however, was gliding like a dark, deep stream beneath the airy structures he thus reared to keep his mind from being swept off by its gloomy current. To this end, he surrendered his pen to the most obvious pleasantry at hand, and dallied with the most casual thoughts of the moment, as Hamlet talks about the "old true-penny in the cellerage," when the idea of his father's spirit is weighing with awful mysteriousness upon his heart, and amuses himself with joking Old Polonius, when the thought of filial revenge is swaying the very depths of his soul. Cowper speculates on baloons, moralizes on politics, chronicles the details of *his home-experience*, even to the accidents resulting from *the use of a broken* table, with the charming air of play-

fulness that marks the correspondence of a lively girl. How often are these letters the proofs of rare heroism! How often were those flowers of fancy watered by a bleeding heart! By what an effort of will was his mind turned from its forebodings, from the dread of his wretched anniversary, from the one horrible idea that darkened his being, to the very trifles of common-life, the every-day circumstances which he knew so well how to array with fresh interest and agreeable combination! Cowper's story indicates what a world of experience is contained in one solitary life. It lifts the veil from a single human bosom, and displays all the elements of suffering, adventure and peace, which we are apt to think so dependant upon outward circumstances! There is more to be learned from such a record than most histories afford. They relate things *en masse*, and battles, kings and courts pass before us, like mists along a mountain-range; but in such a life as that of Cowper, we tremble at the capacity of woe involved in the possession of sensibility, and trace with awe and pity the mystery of a "mind diseased." The anatomy of the soul is, as it were, partially disclosed. Its conflicting elements, its intensity of reflection, its marvellous action, fill us with a new and more tender reverence. Nor are the darker shades of this remarkable mental portrait unrelieved. To the reader of his life, Cowper's encounter with young Unwin, under the trees at Huntingdon, is as bright a gleam of destiny as that which visited his heart at Southampton. At the very outset of his acquaintance with this delightful family, he calls them "comfortable people." This term may seem rather humble compared with such epithets as 'brilliant,' 'gifted' and 'interesting;' but to a refined mind it is full of significance. Would there were more comfortable people in the world! *Where there is* rare talent in a companion, there is *seldom repose.* Enthusiasm is apt to make very uncom-

fortable demands upon our sympathies, and strong-sense is not infrequently accompanied by a dogmatical spirit. Erudite society is generally devoid of freshness, and poetical spirits have the reputation of egotism. However improving such companions may be, to sensitive persons they are seldom comfortable. There is a silent influence in the mere presence of every one, which, whether animal magnetism be true or not, makes itself felt, unless the nerves are insensible; and then there is a decided character in the voice and manner, as well as in the conversation. In comfortable people, all these are harmonized. The whole impression is cheering. We are at ease, and yet gratified; we are soothed and happy. With such companionship was Cowper blessed in the Unwins. No 'stricken deer' that ever left the herd of men, required such a solace more. We cannot wonder it proved a balm. The matronly figure of Mrs. Unwin and her 'sweet, serene face,' rise before the fancy as pictures of actual memory. We see her knitting beside the fire on a winter day, and Cowper writing opposite; hear her friendly expostulation when he overtasked his mind, and see the smile with which she 'restored his fiddle,' when rest made it safe to resume the pen. We follow them with a gaze of affectionate respect as they walk at noon along the gravel-walk, and honour the maternal solicitude that sustains her patient vigils beside the sick-bed of the bard. In imagination we trace her demeanor, as with true female tact she contrived to make the people regard her charge only with reverence. Like a star of peace and promise, beams the memory of this excellent woman upon Cowper's sad history; and Lady Hesketh and 'Sister Anne' are the lesser, but still benignant luminaries of that troubled sky. Such glimpses of woman vindicate her true rights more than all the rhetoric of Mary Wolstonecraft. They prove her claim to higher

respect than can attach to the trophies of valour or genius. They exhibit her in all the dignity of pure affection, in the discharge of duties and the exercise of sentiment more exalted than the statesman or soldier can ever boast. They throw around Olney more sacred associations than those which consecrate Vaucluse. Not to a selfish passion, not to ambitious display, not to petty triumphs did these women minister, but to a kindred nature whose self-sustaining energies had been weakened, to a rare spirit bereft of a hope, to a noble heart over-shadowed by despair. It was an office worthy of angels; and even on earth was it thus fulfilled.

It is not surprising that Byron denied to Cowper the title of poet. To an impassioned imagination, the tone of his writings cannot but appear subdued even to absolute tameness. There are, however, in his poems flights of fancy, fine comparisons and beautiful descriptive sketches enough to quicken and impart singular interest to the 'still life' so congenial to his muse. He compared her array not inaptly to a quaker-costume. Verse was deliberately adopted by Cowper at a mature age, as a medium of usefulness. His poetry is not therefore the overflowing of youthful feeling, and his good judgment probably warned him to avoid exciting themes, even had his inclination tended in that direction. He became a lay-preacher in numbers. His object was to improve men, not like the bard of Avon by powerfully unfolding their passions, nor like Pope by pure satire; but rather through the quiet teachings of a moralist. He discourses upon hunting, cards, the abuses of the clerical profession and other prevailing follies, like a man who is convinced of the vanity of worldly pleasure and anxious to dispel its allusions from other minds. His strain is generally characterized by *good sense, occasionally* enlivened by quiet humour, and *frequently exhibits uncommon* beauties of style and image

ry. It is almost invariably calm. Moral indignation is perhaps the only very warm sentiment with which it glows. It may be questioned whether Cowper's previous experience was the best adapted to educate a reformer. He was a member of a society of wits, called the 'Nonsense Club;' and from what we can learn of his associates, it is highly probable that the moderate pursuit of pleasure was a spectacle very unfamiliar to his youth. Hence, perhaps, the severe light in which he viewed society, and the narrow system upon which he judged mankind.

> 'Truths that the theorist could never reach,
> And observation taught me I would teach.'

It is obvious that the poet's observation was remarkably nice and true in certain departments of life, but his early diffidence, few companions and retiring habits must have rendered his views of social characteristics, partial and imperfect. His pictures of spiritual pride and clerical foppery are indeed life-like, but prejudice blinded him to many of the redeeming traits of human nature, and the habit of judging all men by the mere light of his own consciousness prevented him from realizing many of their real wants, and best instincts. His notions on the subject of music, the drama, life in cities, and some other subjects, were one-sided and unphilosophical. He generally unfolds the truth, but it is not always the whole truth. There is, too, a poetic remedy for human error, that his melancholy temper forbade his applying. It is derived from the religion of hope, faith in man—the genial optimism which some later bards have delightfully advocated. To direct men's thoughts to the redeeming aspects of life, to celebrate the sunshine and the flower as types of Eternal goodness and symbols of human joy, to lead forth the sated reveller and make him feel the glory of the stars and the freshness of the breeze, to breathe into the ear of toil the melodies of evening, to

charm the votary of fashion by endearing portraitures of humble virtue—these have been found moral specifics, superior to formal expostulation or direct appeal. Cowper doubtless exerted a happy influence upon his contemporaries, and there is an order of minds to which his teachings are peculiarly adapted. He speaks from the contemplative air of rural retirement. He went thither "to muse on the perishing pleasures of life," to prove that

> The only amaranthine flower on earth,
> Is Virtue; the only lasting treasure, Truth.

In favour of these principles he addressed his countrymen, and the strain was worthier than any that had long struck their ears. Gradually it found a response, confirmed the right intentions of lowly hearts, and carried conviction to many a thoughtful youth. There was little, however, in this improved poetry, of the "richest music of humanity," or of the electrifying cheerfulness of true inspiration, and hence, much of it has lost its interest, and the bard of Olney is known chiefly by a few characteristic gems of moral meditation and graphic portraiture. Our obligations, then, to Cowper as a teacher, are comparatively limited. He was conscious of a good design, and felt himself a sincere advocate.

> 'But nobler yet, and nearer to the skies,
> To feel one's self in hours serene and still,
> One of the spirits chosen by Heaven to turn
> The sunny side of things to human eyes.'

The most truly poetic phases of Cowper's verse, are the portions devoted to rural and domestic subjects. Here he was at home and alive to every impression. His disposition was of that retiring kind that shrinks from the world, and is free and at ease only in seclusion. To *exhibit himself, he tells* us, was 'mortal poison;' and his *favourite image to* represent his own condition, was drawn

from the touching instinct which leads a wounded deer to quit the herd and withdraw into lonely shades to die. He desired no nearer view of the world than he could gain from the 'busy map of life'—a newspaper; or through the 'loop-holes of retreat, to see the stir of the great Babel and not feel the crowd.' I knew a lady whose feelings, in this respect, strongly resembled those of Cowper, who assured me, she often wished herself provided like a snail, that she might peep out securely from her shell, and withdraw in a moment from a stranger's gaze behind an impenetrable shield. Such beings find their chief happiness in the sacred privacy of home. They leave every public shrine to keep a constant vigil at the domestic altar. There burns without ceasing, the fire of their devotion. They turn from the idols of fashion to worship their household gods. The fire-side, the accustomed window, the familiar garden bound their desires. To happy domestic influences Cowper owed all the peace of mind he enjoyed. He eulogized the blessing with grateful sincerity.

> O friendly to the best pursuits of man,
> Friendly to thought, to virtue and to peace,
> Domestic life in rural leisure passed!

"Constant occupation without care," was his ideal of existence. Even winter was endeared by its home-enjoyments:

> I crown thee king of intimate delights
> Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness.

It was here that the poet struck a responsive chord in the hearts of his countrymen. He sang of the sofa—a memorial of English comfort; of home, the castle of English happiness and independence;—of the newspaper—the morning and evening pastime of Englishmen;—of the *'hissing urn' and* 'the cups that cheer, but not inebriate'—*the peculiar luxury* of his native land;—of the 'parlour

twilight,' the 'winter evening,' the 'noon-day walk'—all subjects consecrated by national associations. Goldsmith and Thomson are the poets of rural life, and Cowper completes the charming triumvirate. The latter's love of the country was absolute.

> I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,
> That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,
> But there I laid the scene.

His description of the pursuits of horticulture, winter landscapes, and rustic pleasures, eloquently betray this peculiar fondness for the scenery and habits of rural life. Many of these pictures are unique, and constitute Cowper's best title to poetic fame.

# THOMSON.

HAPPINESS is considered by many philosophers as chiefly dependant upon constitution. There is certainly a vast difference in the susceptibility to enjoyment among men, and none the less as regards their capacity of endurance. An easy temperament—a mind endowed with luxurious tastes, yet undisturbed by intense desire, will be sure of gratification when free from physical suffering, and within reach of its favourite objects; while an ambitious and restless disposition, pines in the midst of plenty. When an amiable heart is united to ample mental resources, good health and a contented spirit, a certain quiet Epicurism is the result which renders life prolific of pleasure. Men thus organized and endowed, are happy until actually deprived of their blessings. They feel little concern for the future; habitually disregard the painful associations of the past, and cordially improve the present. They contrive to maintain a perpetual truce with care. Their equanimity is not ruffled by passion. Their peace is seldom invaded by anxiety. Physically healthy, the brain operates serenely; optimists by nature, hope balances apprehension, and the heart preserves a complacent self-possession, Such men never have a "lean and hungry look." They "hear music," *relish good* viands, and extol gratitude as a cardinal *virtue. Longings* waste not their energies; ardent *hopes win not* their attention from the immediate. They

are prompt on all pleasurable occasions. Fervid anticipation mars not to them reality. Irritating regret chains them not to departed joys. Life has momently a fresh interest. They go with the stream, and take things as they come, ever contriving to see a rainbow in the midst of the storm. Such men grow fat. They are most pleasing companions. They put us at ease and in good humour with the world. They will not quarrel, and are seldom vexed. No fever of philanthropy, no mania of politics, no pressure of affairs, can permanently excite them. They are all for the calm, the sequestered, the tasteful, the luxurious. They smile at the writhing of the passionate, and pity the eager crowd. The world calls them lazy, and they are not anxious to discredit the title. In literature, such men form the exception, not the rule. The pursuit of letters is too often joined with morbid vanity and insatiable ambition. Were it not for an occasional example of the Epicurean *letterato*, the profession might be deemed incompatible with happiness. Where the "elements are so mixed" in the man as to promote the poet's felicity, few human beings derive from existence, higher and more constant satisfaction. The muse to these souls comes with little courting. Study is but infrequently a toil. Such spirits *wait* for good rather than *seek* it; above all, they *appropriate* it, and, unless fortune is strangely perverse, obtain and actualize more than an average share.

Of this species was James Thomson. When he first went up to London with "Winter" as a capital, while enjoying the view of city novelties, he suffered his introductory letters to be purloined. He was unadroit, a poor horseman, and a bad reader. The affections once concentrated upon Amanda, were dispersed among his friends and family; but he was a celibate rather from necessity than choice.

A literary lady invited him to pass the summer at her country-seat, but instead of flattering her intellectual propensity by sage conversation, he preferred to sip wine with her husband, and so lost the favour of a Countess. He was once seen to bite out the sunny side of a peach with his hands in his pockets. A lover of music, he did not fatigue himself with blowing a flute or flourishing a fiddle bow, but kept an Æolian harp in his window, and listened to the nightingales.

> Lend me your song, ye nightingales! oh pour
> The mazy running soul of melody
> Into my varied verse.

He courted the great for patronage, rather than seek "toilsome gains" by the industrious exercise of his powers. He neglected his private concerns, until want or friendship goaded him to exertion. He mused pleasantly when alone, sat silent in large companies, and let the current of his soul flow freely among his intimate companions. He composed chiefly at night, when social allurements did not interfere with his meditations. To him might well apply what was said of a similar character—"Give him his leg of mutton and bottle of wine, and, in the very thick of calamity, he would be happy for the time being." He speaks of the "godlike wisdom of the *tempered* breast," and remarks—"to have always some secret, darling idea, to which one can still have recourse, amidst the noise and nonsense of the world, and which never fails to touch us in the most exquisite manner, is an art of happiness that fortune cannot deprive us of."

The very diction of Thomson breathes a kind of luxurious serenity. The opening stanzas of the Castle of *Indolence present* a scene of dreamy repose, which soothes *and wins the fancy* like an Eastern tale.

Here naught but candour reigns, indulgent ease,
Good-natur'd lounging, sauntering up and down:
They who are pleased themselves must always please;
On other's ways they never squint or frown,
Nor heed what haps in hamlet or in town.
* * * * * *
What, what is virtue, but repose of mind,
A pure ethereal calm, that knows no storm;
Above the reach of wild ambition's wind,
Above those passions that this world deform?

The following is a friend's description of Thomson, inserted in his own poem:

A bard here dwelt, more fat than bard beseems,
Who void of envy, guile, and lust of gain,
On virtue still, and Nature's pleasing themes,
Poured forth his unpremeditated strain:
The world forsaking with a calm disdain,
Here laugh'd he careless in his easy seat;
Here quaffed encircled with the joyous train,
Oft moralizing sage; his ditty sweet,
He loathéd much to write, he cared not to repeat.

The blank-verse of the "Seasons" has none of the lofty effort of Milton, nor the passionate force so common in Shakspere. It is flowing and free. We perceive, indeed, a careful selection of words, and are sometimes conscious of a studied construction. But, generally speaking, the language of Thomson is diffuse. His native idleness tinctures his poetic style. Perhaps its peculiar charm consists in the facility and unfettered course of the rhythm. One reason, however, of the vagueness of the impression we derive from his poetry, is the prolixity of the language. Several times in the course of this poem, occurs the word "amusive"—an epithet which admirably serves to designate the character of Thomson's verse.

*Although, for the* most part, the bard of the "Seasons," *was a passive* recipient of poetical influences,

rather than a devoted worshipper and enthusiastic student, let us fully recognize the worth of such poetry. There is a meditative interest and quiet morality interwoven with its pictures. In accordance with his cast of mind, Thomson deemed secluded ease infinitely preferable to the "weary labyrinth of state," or the "smooth barbarity of courts." His essentials of happiness were

> An elegant sufficiency, content,
> Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
> Ease and alternate labour, useful life,
> Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven.

And with genuine poetic pride, he sings:

> I care not Fortune what you me deny,
> You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;
> You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
> Through which Aurora shows her brightening face;
> You cannot bar my constant feet to trace,
> The woods or lawn, by living stream at eve;
> Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
> And I their toys to the great children leave:
> Of fancy, reason, virtue nought can me bereave.

The tragedies and several minor efforts of Thomson are now quite neglected; and he is remembered by two poems only. The reflective portions of these works are unquestionable as regards the principles and motives inculcated. There is often a pure vein of devotion and patriotic feeling, which imparts the most pleasing impression of the poet's views and character, and sufficiently accounts for the warm personal estimation in which he was held.

The "Seasons" ranks high in English poetry, chiefly from its descriptive fidelity. If an inhabitant of this planet were suddenly transferred to another sphere where an entirely different order of things prevailed, this poem would forever preserve to his mind a vivid picture of the earth he has quitted. Thomson seems to have proceeded most conscientiously in his genial task. He has indited on

artist-like and correct nomenclature of the phenomena of Nature. For the most part the "Seasons" is a narrative of physical facts, familiar to every one. This explains the attractiveness of the poem. We are ever delighted with a true representation of whatever interests us. It requires an introspective mind to appreciate the grand portraitures of human passion and experience; but the graphic delineation of sensible objects appeals to universal observation. Hence the popularity of Thomson. He has faithfully traced the various changes consequent upon the varying Year. The alternate vocations of husbandry, the successive sports which beguile the monotony of country life, the drought and the freshet, the snow-storm and the spring morning, the midsummer noon and the winter night, have found in him a graceful chronicler. His pages recall at once and with singular life the associations of the Seasons. Beyond this, they have no very strong hold upon the feelings. We derive from them few powerful impressions. Their influence is pleasing, but vague. There is a remarkable repose in the strain. It is more like the agreeable lassitude of a summer afternoon, than the clear excitement of an autumn morning. The tasteful diction is often cold; and were it not for the digressions which the poet makes to express occasionally some cherished feeling, we should often find him rather tame and business-like. But the amiable and excellent sentiments he displays, the overflowing kindness of his heart, and the pensive morality scattered among his descriptions, serve to enliven them with something of a personal, tender and attractive hue.

I cannot go
Where universal Love smiles not around,
Sustaining all yon orbs and all their sons;
From *seeming* evil still educing good;
*And better* thence again, and better still
*In infinite* progression.

The scholar, the friend and the idle dreamer, appear as conspicuously as the bard. The very familiarity of the scenes and circumstances, to which the poem is devoted, is attractive. It is worthy of note, that we are as easily interested by what is exceedingly familiar, as by the novel and extraordinary. If a writer does not "o'erstep the modesty of nature," we like him all the better for treating of what is very near to us. The curiosity of the multitude is not extensive. The most universal sympathy is that devoted to what is adjacent. Cervantes rose to fame by describing the manners of his own country. There are hundreds who follow Thomson with delight over the every-day scenes of the earth, to one who soars with Milton beyond its confines. Hence it has been said that "the Seasons look best a little torn and dog's-eared;" and a man of genius who saw a copy in this condition on the window-seat of an ale-house, exclaimed—"this is fame!" Paul Jones was a devoted lover of this poem. What a contrast must its peaceful beauty have presented to the scenes of violence and danger in which he delighted!

The varying popularity of celebrated works is to be accounted for principally by their distance or vicinity to the associations of each age. We sometimes yawn over Ariosto's battles and knights, while we are often kindled and charmed by Childe Harold. Chivalric enterprises belong to the past; but a tour through Switzerland and Italy, is among the common achievements of the day. And thus Thomson is indebted to his faithful pictures of Nature's annual decay and renovation, for his continued estimation as a poet.

> "Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore,
> When Thames in summer-wreaths is drest,
> *And oft* suspend the dripping oar,
> *To bid his* gentle spirit rest."

# YOUNG.

THE associations connected with Young, are quite incongruous. His very name is out of place as applied to his productions; it would be difficult to discover an equal quantity of verse less coloured and warmed by genuine youthful feeling. We can hardly realize that Young was ever young. Where, we are ready to ask, is that confidence in good, that buoyant hope, that ardent recognition of the true delights of being, which throw such a charm around the effusions of youth?

Nor does the discrepancy end here. Two of the best known anecdotes of Young, are in direct contradiction to the spirit of his muse. The first is that gallant reply to two ladies, who forced him to leave them in a garden, to receive a visitor:

> Thus Adam looked when from the garden driven,
> And thus disputed orders sent from Heaven;
> Like him I go; but yet to go am loth,
> Like him I go, for angels drove us both;
> Hard was his fate, but mine still more unkind,
> His Eve went with him but mine stays behind.

The other incident occurred while he was with a gay party in a pleasure-boat. A gentleman rather pertinaciously insisted that he should play on his flute, and to revenge himself, Young is said to have challenged him, *and then with a pistol* aimed at his head, forced him to *dance a hornpipe* by way of retaliation.

Other poets have sung with spontaneous joy of the loveliness of earth and the sweetness of affection, and seem to have found in their fresh hearts, an antidote for outward evil. This man gathers up the shadows, and seldom inweaves amid them, either sunbeams or starlight. Other bards have first struck the lyre to celebrate the merits of one beloved, or reflect scenes of natural beauty; this one, chose for his first theme, "The Last Day." Life, with its mysterious experience, its stirring incidents, its warm hopes and lofty aspirations, has inspired the early efforts of most poets; but to Young, death was a subject more congenial and attractive. The burden of his lays is contempt of earthly grandeur, and yet he sought preferment all his life. His poems advocate a competency, as the only just desire of a reasonable being, in this world; but he has left behind him a reputation for parsimony. No one has set forth in stronger language the dangers of social life; yet in his retirement, the gloomy bard pined at the world's neglect, and welcomed every stray visitor, in such a manner as to belie his recorded opinions of human nature. He counselled Lorenzo in strains of solemn warning, against Court subserviency; while every book of the poem is dedicated to some noble friend, and the sage counsellor was indebted to patronage for his chief privileges, and would fain have increased the obligations!

The true office of the minstrel is to cheer. We do not turn to poetry to aggravate, but to lighten the sorrows of our lot. Its office should be consoling. The genuine poet is an optimist. He instinctively seizes the redeeming feature in a landscape, a circumstance or a face. He fondly dwells on better moments. He loves to reconcile *man to life.* The blessing and not the bane, gives excitement to his thoughts. Indeed, what the phrenologists call ideality, appears to be a quality beneficently provided,

for the very purpose of meliorating the aspects of existence to the consciousness of man. Hence the uncloudedness of many a reminiscence, and the joyous excitement of many a hope. Hence those blended pictures which sometimes rise to the fancy, in which the shades of life only serve to illustrate its sunny portions. Poetry should not haunt the unwholesome mine, unless with a safety-lamp of sunshine. It is her vocation to collect to a focus, the scattered rays of happiness; to gather the flowers in our path, and twine them into wreaths to deck the brow of care; to lead us beside waters that "go softly," and not to the barren shores of the Dead Sea; to lift our gaze to the mountains and the stars; and waft to our ears, "the music of humanity," rather than her groans. Let every man beware how he gives expression in verse or prose, to morbid feeling. Let him suffer in silence. If he have nothing hopeful to communicate, let him hold his peace. We see and hear and feel enough of gloomy import, for all purposes of discipline. If any one strike the lyre, we pray it be to a strain which shall elevate us above "the smoke and stir of this dim spot." Let the problem of human suffering be approached only by those, who carry balm for the wounded, and solace for the mourner.

Young did not thus regard the art he cultivated. His early life is said to have been rather unprincipled. Perhaps he drank so intemperately of the cup of pleasure while a youth, that little but the dregs remained for after life. Certain it is, that he took no little satisfaction in setting forth the miseries of life in gloomy array; and no discriminating mind can fail to perceive, that the "Complaint" is infinitely more effective than the "Consolation." The former appears to have been written *con amore; the latter has* a forced and formal air. As a *picture of life, Young's* Night Thoughts are partial and

morbid. Their poetry, however, consists in so melancholy a concatenation of ideas, as occasionally to afford a sublime sensation. We can readily believe, that the bard was accustomed to write by the light of a candle stuck in a human skull. This species of poetic sadness has a foundation in our nature. At certain periods, every man of a reflective cast and strong imagination, takes a kind of melancholy pleasure in musing among the tombs, confronting the effigies of mortality, and giving his thoughts free range amid the associations of death.—In Egypt, we are told, sepulchral monuments often outvie the dwellings of the living, both in number and magnificence; and we can easily fancy the sad interest of the traveller as he marks the sculptured tombs, and hears, along the banks of the solemn Nile, the wailing over an Arab's corpse. But there is a limit, beyond which, such contemplations transcend the bounds both of true poetry and healthful moral impression. No one can discover any superior sanctity among the Capuchins of Italy, because of their vigils in catacombs, or of their familiarity with the ghastly remains of their departed brethren. And it is precisely here that Young has "o'erstepped the modesty of nature." His portraiture of death and human ills, is too unrelieved for wholesome effect. To realize how uniform are his notes of woe, let any one read, or attempt to read, the Night Thoughts, consecutively. There are powerful passages, ingenious figures, terse and vivid expressions; and, in certain moods, fragments of this elaborate poem, cannot but afford pleasure and awaken admiration.

There is a very striking metaphor comparing pleasure to quicksilver; and the following are fair examples of *his impressive* figures:

"— hearts wounded, like the wounded air,
Soon close; where passed the shaft, no trace is found,

As from the wing no stain the sky retains;
The parted wave no furrow from the keel;
So dies, in human hearts, the thought of death.

—

Like birds, whose beauties languish half-concealed,
Till mounted on the wing, their glossy plumes
Expanded, shine with azure, green and gold;
So blessings brighten as they take their flight.

—

The nameless He whose nod is nature's birth,
And nature's shield the shadow of his hand;
Her dissolution, his suspended smile.

But as a whole, as a book to grow familiar with, it is in no small degree false to the true ends of poetry. The morality is too often little better than mere prudence. One of his arguments for piety is, "'tis highly *prudent* to make one sure friend." His personification is frequently bombastic. His language sometimes becomes common-place and turgid; and we are obliged to confess that in this, as in almost all other long poems, the design is too extended, and the real gold beaten out to an extent perfectly unwarrantable. The first books are undoubtedly the best. They were inspired by personal grief, and therefore have a force and effect, which gradually disappear as we proceed. From a poet, the mourner became a theologian, a croaker, a reasoner, and a prosy sermonizer. There are leagues of desert, and only here and there an oasis. In portraying his domestic afflictions, Young is truly eloquent, and we feel with him and for him. In estimating life, satirizing the love of fame or of pleasure, and decrying the world, there is something too professional, laboured and partial in his style, to produce effect. We involuntarily think of the disappointed churchman, and fancy that, in his dreams, whatever were his night-thoughts, Queen Mab visited him with visions of "another benefice." There are some clever lines in *his satires.* *His tragedy*—"The Revenge," has been

famous, but the reader is so constantly reminded of Othello, that its merits are quite lost in the associations of that sublime drama.

I remember stopping at a book-stall in Florence, in company with a young Italian of strong poetical sympathies. He pointed, with a visible shudder, to a translation of "Young's Night Thoughts," and asked me, who but a Briton could ever read that epitome of English gloom. The idea of this poem being read at a dinner, or in the garden of a villa, to a party of ladies and knights, after the manner of Tasso and Ariosto, is certainly amusing. Yet there is a peculiar charm to Northern imaginations, in some of Young's dark pencillings. The people of high latitudes, are subject to moods of reflection in which such serious recognition of sad truths is genial, and even fascinating; and at such moments, they prefer Ecclesiastes to Solomon's Song—the dark grove of pines to the bower of vine-leaves, and Dr. Young to Thomas Moore. Accordingly, many lines of the former have passed into proverbs; and among the good dames and thoughtful gentlemen of the past generation, a well-thumbed copy of the Night Thoughts often attested the veneration they inspired. The point of just sympathy with our author is, however, confined to his personal afflictions. We recognize the excellence of Narcissa, who "sparkled, was exhaled, and went to heaven," and follow the poet with tender reverence, as he bears her body, to that solitary garden in Montpelier, where with "pious sacrilege a grave he stole." We echo the touching inquiry which so many hearts have addressed to Death;—

Insatiate archer! could not one suffice?

It is only when Young elaborates his theme, and attempts to throw a pall over the universe, to collect the *shadows of life* into a portentous array, to brood over *and magnify evil*, that we feel that his influence is un-

grateful, and perceive that spleen, rather than philosophy guides his pen. Let us bring together a few of his gloomy truisms, and see if their contemplation be calculated to make our actual lot any happier and more improving:

———sleep—
Swift on her downy pinions flies from woe,
And lights on lids unsullied with a tear.

—

All on earth is shadow, all beyond
Is substance.

—

The spider's most attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable, to man's slender tie
On earthly bliss.

—

War, famine, pest, volcano, storm and fire,
Intestine broils, oppression, with her heart
Wrapt up in triple brass, besiege mankind.

—

Our very wishes give us not our wish.

—

The smoothest course of Nature has its pain,
And truest friends, through error, wound our rest.

—

Loud sorrows howl, envenomed passions bite,
Ravenous calamities our vitals seize.

—

At thirty, man suspects himself a fool;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan.

—

Life is war,
Eternal war with woe.

—

Fresh hopes are hourly sown
In furrowed brows.

—

How swift the shuttle flies that weaves thy shroud!

—

Fondness for fame is avarice of air.

—

Death loves a shining mark.

—

*There's not a day*, but, to the man of thought
*Betrays some secret*, that throws new reproach
*On life, and makes* him sick of seeing man.

Doubtless there is more or less truth in these and a thousand other similar phrases of Young; but let it be remembered, that they are not the whole truth; and if they were, the truth is not to be spoken at all times. If the courteous and Christian, though worldly-minded doctor, had imbibed a more cheerful theology; if he had walked less in grave-yards and more among his fellow-creatures; if an expansive benevolence and a sunny temper had made him more alive to the good, the beautiful and the true, he would have suffered some misgivings, in thus libelling this poor world, and exaggerating the trials of life. Instead of lamenting our "short correspondence with the sun," he would have rejoiced in its beams while he could. Instead of declaring the "clime of human life inclement," he would have done his best to warm it with the glow of social sympathy and cheerful gratitude. Instead of finding "human happiness" a "sad sight," he would have been exhilarated at its presence, however transient; and felt thankful, that, with all their troubles, it is still given to frail mortals,

> "To drink the golden spirit of the day,
> And triumph in existence."

Young's command of language is remarkable, and many of his comparisons ingenious. We are surprised to encounter in the midst of some of his loftiest flights, an image borrowed from familiar and common life. Perhaps it is this mingling of the well-known and the lofty, that makes him a favourite with a certain class of readers. To this attraction must be added his evangelical character and the religious tone he assumes, which invest his poems with no little authority, in the view of those who profess similar tenets. But while in justice we allow him occasional felicity and impressiveness of *thought and* grandeur of style, we cannot but agree with *Dr. Johnson, that* it is very difficult to assign any general

character to him as a poet. He has no fair claim to be considered emphatically the minstrel of the tomb, or the bard of sorrow. The mournful aspects of human life and destiny can be set forth in a far nobler manner. Around the memories of the departed, poetry has scattered far richer flowers than can be found in the Night Thoughts. The sorrows of humanity have been sung in sweeter strains. Lessons of courage and hope, emotions of patient tenderness, sentiments of magnanimity and trust have been inspired, when bards of more simplicity and love have struck the lyre. Poetry can make even the thought of death beautiful, and the sadness of bereavement not without a certain pleasure. Great poets have elicited from the sternest suffering, a principle of enjoyment. Sublime faith and earnest love can conjure spirits the most lovely from the darkest abyss. By exhibiting human energy in conflict with adversity, by giving free scope to the eloquence of sorrow, by invoking the spirit of hope, the muse often weaves a rainbow over the valley of tears. Who pities Hamlet? Who does not recognize a profound interest in the workings of his delicate soul, surpassing and illuming the darkness of his lot? Who is not soothed instead of saddened by true elegiac poetry—the tender strains, for instance, of such a bard as Hervey? Night, even to the mourner, brings not, ever or often, such unalloyed bitterness as Young portrays. To Schiller and Thomson it was the brightest season. To the genuine poetical soul its silence and shadows, its moaning breeze and countless stars, its mystery and beautiful repose, bring a solemn happiness. We may, indeed, then "keep assignation with our woe;" but in such peaceful and lovely hours, how often does anguish melt in tears and wild grief become sad musing! How often *by some invisible influence*, do we grow reconciled and *hopeful! How often* do "stars look down as they were

angel's eyes!" Many of the sentiments, and most of the spirit of Young's Night Thoughts, is false to the true inspiration and the holy effulgence of that sacred season. To one of our own poets it has spoken in a higher and more blessed strain. He makes us feel that there are "Voices of the Night" which cheer, elevate, and console:

O holy night! from thee I learn to bear
What man has borne before!
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of Care,
And they complain no more.

—

Then the forms of the departed
Enter at the open door;
The beloved, the true-hearted,
Come to visit me once more.

—

O, though oft depressed and lonely,
All my fears are laid aside,
If I but remember only
Such as these have lived and died.

—

The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast,
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed.

—

O fear not, in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know, how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

# ALFIERI.

PERHAPS there is no character in modern literary history who so strikingly illustrates the power of *will* as Victor Alfieri. Irresolution is one of the most common infirmities of poetic genius. In practical pursuits firmness of purpose is so essential to success that the want of it very soon leads to fatal consequences. Intellectual effort, on the contrary, is so much more dependant for its power and felicity upon peculiar moods of feeling and combinations of circumstances, that we scarcely expect a continuous regularity in its exercise. Hence we speak of a writer's happy moments, of being in the vein for a particular subject, and of the ebb and flow of that mysterious tide of inspiration which bears into light the creations of thought. Imaginative men are confessedly more variable, capricious, and undeterminate than others. Their memoirs usually exhibit the utmost want of method and continuity as regards the time and progress of their labours. Individuals of strong sense and calm temperament can discern no law governing the mental existence of poetical beings. There is so much that is apparently wayward and disorderly in the application of their gifts, that ill success in life is proverbially their lot, and common prejudice deems all genius erratic. Probably no single fact relative to Scott has excited greater surprise *than his habitual and* regular industry. Social and local *influences, personal* circumstances, the state of the health,

and even of the weather—and far more, the mood of mind, are supposed to absolve poets from the obligation of firmness. Victor Alfieri demonstrated the immense efficacy of this single quality. We are almost tempted, as we contemplate his career, to rank powerful volition with genius itself. For by virtue of his force of purpose he overcame the formidable obstacles of a most unpropitious education, long habits of indulgence and an undisciplined mind. Upon the most unpromising basis he reared a splendid intellectual fabric. Amid the most enervating influences he displayed extraordinary strength. With scarcely any external encouragement he wrought out in his own nature a stupendous revolution. His example is a most eloquent appeal in favour of human versatility. Disposition, habit, the want of knowledge, he conquered by moral determination. As Napoleon cut the Simplon through the rocks and snow of the Alps, Alfieri shaped his lonely way to the temple of fame over mountains of difficulty and amid the barren wastes of ignorance. This strength of purpose did not appear in his childhood except in one or two instances of juvenile obstinacy, by no means rare at that age. Another characteristic, perhaps inseparable from great decision, was much more manifest. From his earliest years it is evident he felt profoundly. Mortification of any kind sank deeply into his soul. The novices who officiated at church won his young affections, though he only beheld them in attendance at the altar. In that spontaneous and almost ideal love, we recognise the germs of the passion that in after life fired his heart. There is a vividness in his reminiscences of infancy which proves that his very earliest experience was intense.

*Alfieri complains* that he was born in an amphibious *country. And* certainly there is no section of Italy *where the* national characteristics are more invaded than

Piedmont. The soil is Italian, the government Austrian, the language of society French. Hence manners, opinions, customs, and much of the aspect of the capital, present to the stranger an incongruous mixture. The anomalous influences of his birth-place seem to have extended to his destiny. The picture he has left of what was called his education, is one of the most alarming commentaries upon a despotic government that ever was written. Pedantry instead of truth, verbal memory instead of ideas, antiquated Latin instead of his native literature, and formal dogmas instead of interesting facts, were the fruit of his academic course. To this evil is to be added that of absence from all maternal or domestic influences at an infantile age, the tyranny of a dissipated valet, of a powerful, stupid fellow-student and injudicious professors, ill health, unjust restraint and ill-chosen companions. During these perverted years, how slept that energetic mind! Occasionally music, some verses of Metastasio or of Ariosto read by stealth, an hour of tears with his sister at the convent grate, a ride into the environs, or a holiday dinner with an uncle—breaks in like a stray gleam of sunshine upon the wasting and monotonous life of the neglected boy. But as a whole, the dawn of his being, to a reflective mind, is inexpressibly sad. Rich and nobly born, yet confined to a useless and depressing routine, with his wild Piedmontese blood, his thirsting heart, his despairing temperament—not a healthful conviction, not a lofty hope, not an ennobling aim grew up in the rich soil of that young soul—thus training under *royal* authority. And yet but a short distance without those college walls rise in freedom and majesty the snow-covered mountains, upon which the rosy sunlight lingers, like the altars of liberty warmed by the smile of heaven. *If any* agency redeemed and preserved *the unconscious youth of* Alfieri, it was that of Nature;

and we are relieved to follow him, unprepared as he was, on the first wild journey of his youth. It is melancholy to think of a young Italian traversing his country for the first time, with no sense of its peculiar associations. Yet thus was it with Alfieri in his early wanderings. He loved indeed the excitement of locomotion; but the most attractive localities soon wearied him. He passed with inattentive soul the shrine of genius. He gazed listlessly upon the trophies of art. He sadly confesses that he brought nothing home from his journeyings but a fit of illness. Still the mere variety of such a life had become necessary.

Again and again he renewed his travels until he had seen, in a rapid and cursory manner, nearly every country in Europe. It is interesting to observe, during these years of dissipation, how, ever and anon, his better nature became active. The sight of the sea, a solitary ride in the environs of Rome, some of the wonderful aspects of nature in the North, so excited his imagination that he would have "wreaked upon expression" his emotions but for the want of adequate language and skill. He wept in an ecstacy of admiration over the pages of Plutarch, and thought beside the tomb of Michael Angelo how grand it was to leave an example to posterity. It is obvious, indeed, that during a youth, seemingly wholly given to the reckless pursuit of pleasure, Alfieri was always a thinker. Perhaps meditative power is the crowning distinction of gifted minds. There is certainly an order of men who have delighted the world with their genius, having but little claim to the name of students, as that term is usually employed. Ashamed as was the young dramatist of his meagre attainments, the very dissatisfaction which he vainly strove to annihilate by rapid pil*grimages indicates* a mind too self-cognizant to remain *long contented* with inactivity. In reverting to this epoch

of his life, Alfieri gives us a truly painful insight into the restlessness of a forlorn spirit. Neither the freshness of his years, the liberty he enjoyed to roam where he liked, nor his singular susceptibility to many of the enjoyments of life, could afford an antidote to this wretched state of feeling. He subsequently learned that he could not even enjoy peace, far less happiness, without a noble occupation for his mind and a congenial object for his heart. Upon the first of these salutary principles he soon began to act. In one of his visits at home, sitting by the sick-bed of his mistress, in a listless moment, he seized a pen to cover some sheets of paper by way of pastime. Upon the walls of the adjoining apartment were several pictures representing scenes in the history of Antony and Cleopatra. His thoughts were naturally drawn to this subject, and he sketched a few dialogues illustrative of the story. Exceedingly defective in point of language and style, they were not deficient in a certain spirit that suggested a more than ordinary ability. This careless effort was thrust under the sofa-cushion and soon forgotten. It was, however, the first feeble presage of a better experience. The intellect once aroused craved labour as its appropriate sphere, and in a short time Alfieri deliberately formed the resolutions which resulted in a long career of successful mental toil. His first efforts were, of course, very desultory, and his plans were perfected only by degrees. But the satisfaction derived from regular employment, the encouraging and judicious counsel of intelligent friends, and especially the incitement of ambition, gradually induced him to bring into full exercise his singular strength of will. The first step was to break off an ignoble *liason*, and conquer at once habits of conviviality and idleness. As Prince Henry, to the astonishment of his old friend Jack, suddenly threw off the trammels of pleasure upon coming to the throne, so

Alfieri, when he regained the kingdom of his mind, immediately cast aside all dalliance with idleness and folly. Then he commenced, like a very school-boy, the study of grammar, perused and reperused the Italian poets, went to Florence that he might learn even to *think* in Tuscan, and orderèd himself to be tied in a chair to avoid yielding to external attraction that might draw him from his books, or encroach upon his hours of study. Once commenced, the work of self-conquest went bravely on, and thenceforth Alfieri, with only occasional intermissions, was a studious and devoted man. His darling object was glory. He earnestly desired to impress his age, or at least win the respect of posterity, to immortalize his sentiments and accomplish something worthy of renown. He bent all his energies to the task and succeeded.

Among the peculiarities of Alfieri were his inveterate dislike of the French and his fondness of horses. Both the prejudice and the partiality are characteristic. The former originated in his acquaintance with a Parisian dancing-master at the Turin Academy. The levity of this personage, whose art he thoroughly hated, gave him an unprepossessing idea of the nation, which their invasion of Italy was but ill calculated to remove. Paris was never congenial to the poet, and his residence there at the outbreak of the revolution, the insults he received from a mob on leaving the gate, as well as the reserve and thoughtfulness of his nature, confirmed his juvenile antipathy. In many points Alfieri's character assimilated with the English. He became early partial to their country and government, and ardently sympathised in their taste for fine steeds. In truth this passion divided his regards with love and tragedy-writing. Even in boyhood he was chiefly extravagant in his horses. Continually purchasing the finest specimens of this noble animal, taking the greatest pride in displaying their graces and

exercising the most scrupulous care of them, it was one of his chief pleasures to ride on horseback and travel with a fine cavalcade. At one time, with no small difficulty and at a great risk, he transported fourteen splendid horses from England. His account of their passage of the Alps is given with great *goût*. Visions of arching necks and beautiful evolutions haunted his dreams, and his directions for the training of his favourites, when absent, are written with all the precision and interest of an enthusiast.

There is a remarkable blending of energy and weakness, stern opinion and tender feeling, caprice and manliness, in the character of Alfieri. He had the resolution to commence and successfully prosecute the study of Greek, after the age of forty; but not self-command enough to prevent his striking a favourite servant upon the slightest provocation, or hurling a book that displeased him out of the window. He was restless but firm in his attachments, wished ever to be with the few he loved, but in different places. He could not enjoy a medium in any thing. He declares that his head and heart were constantly at war. Alternately silent and loquacious, a laborious and abstemious student and a self-indulgent and reckless traveller, always at extremes, but ever noble in his aspirations, and like Brutus chiefly anxious to respect himself. Above adulation, the earnest advocate of literary and civil freedom, and yet keeping aloof from society and jealous of the least encroachment upon his personal views and purposes; devoted where his heart was engaged; a hater of kings, but not a lover of men, among whom he had indeed widely wandered, but with whom he never intimately mingled. He deeply felt the political degradation of his native land, and set a remarkable example *of personal* independence amid despotic influences. He demonstrated how free a true man might

live among slaves. He aspired to be the poet of liberty, the prophet of a new era, the patriot who lived and wrote against his country's oppression, when other warfare was vain.

Absolute and uncompromising hatred of tyranny was one of the strongest feelings of his soul. In his sonnet on his own portrait, instead of comparing his complexion with snow or a lily, after the manner of most bards, he prefers the phrase, "*pallido come un re sul trono*," pale as a king on his throne. And yet the sentiment did not spring from love of equality or respect for man. Alfieri was anything but a humanitarian. Exclusive in his attachments, full of contempt for the passive spirit that prevailed in Italy, while he thoroughly despised all the badges and supports of royalty, he was a species of intellectual aristocrat. He rejoiced that he was born a nobleman, chiefly that he might inveigh against rank without having his motives impugned. He expatriated himself rather than be subject to the little court of Turin; and transferred his estate to a sister that all claims upon his allegiance might cease. He would not be introduced to Metastasio at Vienna, because he happened to see him bend the knee to Maria Theresa. He boasts that when the French occupied Florence, he remained so perfectly secluded in a neighbouring villa that he was not contaminated by a single Gallic sound or sight; and when the commanding general sought to visit him, he proudly informed him that Victor Alfieri was too old to make new acquaintances. His loftiness of spirit was indomitable. No punishment in childhood was so severe as being taken to mass with a small net on his head. He would not demand his books left behind in Paris lest it should be construed into a recognition of Napoleon's authority. He left many works in manuscript, rather than submit them to the censors before publication. He refused the

academic honours proffered by his native city, and tells us of the marble calmness of visage he preserved before others, when his heart was torn by conflicting passions. His stern independence was, however softened by gentler sentiments. At school he carefully concealed his superior dresses from the eyes of his less fortunate companions, and his best sympathies were excited for the King of Sardinia, whom he so contemned at home, when he saw him dethroned and in exile. He could never sell anything. Even when forced to part with his horses in travelling, he gave them to his banker or some casual acquaintance. Friendship and love were necessities of his being. Without their cheering and sustaining influences, he could not apply his mind with any success; and when deprived for a time of such genial companionship, his distress was so great that he resorted at once to his old solace—constant change of scene. In early life his attachments were variable. He was involved in a duel in London on account of an amour, and was ever flying from one place to another on the wings of passion. But as his intellectual course became settled, a similar permanency seemed to regulate his affections. The light hair and dark eyes of the countess of Albany and especially her superior mind and high tone of feeling fixed the love of Alfieri for twenty-five years, while Gori Gandinelli of Sienna, and the Abbe di Caluso of Turin, were his firm and congenial friends, from whom death alone divided him.

Alfieri's tragedies strongly reflect his character. The personages are few and generally animated by single passions. The language is terse, direct and emphatic, and the whole style formal and impassioned. There is scarcely any attempt at delicate colouring. All is defined and abrupt. *His method seems* to have been to dwell upon a *theme until it* warmed his fancy, boldly sketch its con

ception, and then versify and elaborate it. We find scarcely any of that marvellous and delicate insight into human nature, those refined shades of character, which distinguish Shakspere. Isolated sentiments are forcibly portrayed—certain states of mind powerfully delineated, but the creations are rather in outline or relievo than naturally coloured or varied with the detail of life. Stern resolves and intense feeling find sententious and striking expression in the mouths of his heroes, but a certain phase rather than the whole sphere of their natures is presented. Impressive and elegant often to a most attractive degree is the dialogue ; but little of the living interest is imparted which characterizes the best English tragedies. "If," says a distinguished critic, "the muse of Metastasio is a love-sick nymph, the muse of Alfieri is an Amazon. He gave her a Spartan education; he aimed at being the Cato of the theatre." Much of Italian modern poetry is so enervating in its tone as to possess no attraction for a Saxon mind. Alfieri introduced a new agency in this respect. No small portion of his tragedies is imbued with his own consciousness. Not only do they breathe dire anathemas against Papal usurpation and popular submission, but there is a certain elevating energy, a strength and firmness of manner in the very style, that braces though it may sometimes chill the heart. Herein has the proud tragedian conveyed his best lesson. This hard moulding of his conceptions echoes and reflects the principles upon which he lived. His life and tragedies are the scripture of the nobler minds among the youth of Italy. From them they fortify their souls against the enslaving tendencies of despotism; and learn to aim at independence of feeling and an uncompromising course of life. Such admirers of *Alfieri honour* him next to Dante. They gaze with profound interest on his portrait in the Florence gallery and

the house he so long occupied on the Lung 'Arno. They walk reverently through the street which bears his name at Turin, and visit his tomb in Santa Croce, adorned by the chisel of Canova, as the shrine of liberty as well as of genius.

# CRABBE.

About the period of the Gordon riots, so vividly described in Barnaby Rudge, a young man might have been observed, at the first glimmer of day, restlessly pacing to and fro on Westminster Bridge. Thus George Crabbe passed the night succeeding his application to Burke. It was the last of several appeals he had made to the distinguished men of the day, for relief from the inroads of poverty and encouragement in his devotion to the muse He felt, during those wearisome hours, that the crisis of his fate had arrived. Bravely for many months he had struggled on in the perilous career of a literary adventurer. Like so many men of genius then "gathered to the kings of thought," he had come to London with a stock of poems and a manly heart, trusting to find his way, at length, in that vast metropolis, if not to honourable distinction, at least to usefulness and competence. He had vibrated from the door of the wealthy to the bookseller's counter, from his humble lodgings to the pawnbroker's shop, and hitherto without success. His spirits were elevated and soothed, at this critical season, by the love of one who became the genial companion of his days. "My heart," says one of his letters, "is humbled to all but villany, and I would live, if honestly, in *any situation.* * * Hope, vanity, and the muse will *certainly contribute* something towards a light heart; but *love and the god* of love can only throw a beam of glad-

ness on a heavy one." Happily his claims were recognised and his merits appreciated by Burke, and from his first interview with that generous man his prosperity dates. The early life of Crabbe was passed chiefly at a fishing village on the coast of Suffolk. Nature there was rude and sterile, his fellow beings uncultivated and almost savage, and their lives given to cheerless toil. Yet sometimes a boat's shadow on the sand or a fierce smuggler basking in the sun, would suggest images worthy of Salvator's pencil. If there was in that secluded hamlet less restraint upon human passion, its exhibition was often more affecting and suggestive. If fertile grace was wanting in the scenery, there was something grand in its desolation. It is not surprising that many years after his native spot had been abandoned,—in the bosom of his family, on a beautiful inland domain, Crabbe felt one summer day, such an irrepressible desire to behold the sea, that he suddenly mounted his horse and rode forty miles to the nearest coast. A harsh father and a kind mother, menial labour and stolen hours of desultory reading, the companionship of rough mariners and the love of a charming girl, occasional rhyming and long, solitary walks, an apprenticeship to a village Galen, and the thousand dreams that haunt the young and sanguine, divided the poet's hours. His patience, industry and cheerful temper rendered him no unworthy aspirant for the world's favour; and when fortune smiled upon him in the form of his gifted benefactor, the same regulated habits and bland philosophy that had sustained his baffled youth, led him calmly to enjoy domestic peace and poetical success. His career in the church was marked by active benevolence and a happy influence. It was his singular lot, after the lapse of twenty years *passed in retirement, to* re-appear both as an author and *in the social circles of* London. At home his books and

children agreeably occupied the time which could be spared from professional duty. He enjoyed the warm regard of some of the choicest spirits of the day. When his various publications were finally revised and collected, Murray gave him three thousand pounds for the copyright. In his affections he was singularly blessed, and passed away full of years and honour.

Crabbe was no stoic. He could not conceal his feelings, and was a novel reader all his life. He had suffered enough to teach him to feel for others. There was a rare and winning simplicity in his manners. He was remarkably unambitious for a son of the muses; and sought mental delight according to his instincts rather than from prescribed rules. Manly and independent, with an active and exuberant mind, his character won him as many suffrages as his verse. His attachments, we are told, knew no decline and his heart seemed to mellow rather than grow frigid, with the lapse of time. We discover, in his life and writings, a kind of Indian summer benignly invading the winter of age. Such was Crabbe as a man. His fame, as a poet, is owing in some degree to the time of his appearance. It was his fortune to come forward during one of those lapses in the visits of the muse which invariably insure her a warmer welcome. Perhaps on this very account his merits have been somewhat exaggerated and vaguely defined,—at least by those whose early taste was permanently influenced by his genius.

The kind of insight that distinguishes a man depends upon his taste and associations. A painter will be struck with an effect of light and shade, the contour of a head, or the grouping of a knot of gossips, that an engineer passes unnoticed. In visiting some Roman remains, I was amused at the delight with which an engraver surveyed the inscriptions, and remarked upon the cutting of

ne letters. While one of a party of travellers is absorbed in the appearance of the crops, another indulges a metaphysical turn by analyzing the characters of his companions, and a third is lost in the beauty of the landscape. We recognise a similar diversity among the poets. Some grand truth relating to human nature, excites the muse of Shakspere. He delights to announce that

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

The bards of the visible world, who love to designate its every feature, evince their observation by a happy term or most apt allusion, as when Bryant calls the hills "rock-ribbed," and the ocean a "gray and melancholy waste." Crabbe owes his popularity both to the sphere and quality of his observation. In these, almost exclusively, consists his originality. The form of his verse, the tone of his sentiment, and the play of his fancy, are, by no means, remarkable. He interests us from the comparatively unhackneyed field he selected, and the peculiar manner in which he unfolds its treasures. He seized upon characters and events before thought unworthy of the minstrel. He turned, in a great measure, from the grand and elegant materials of poetry, and sought his themes amid the common-place and the vulgar. Nor was he aided in this course by any elevated theory of his own, like that of Wordsworth. He carried no magic torch into the dark labyrinths he explored, but was satisfied to open them to the light of day. Indeed, Crabbe seems to have reversed all the ordinary principles of the art. His effects arise rather from sterility than luxuriance. His success seems the result rather of a matter-*of-fact than an illusive* process. The oft-quoted question *of the mathematician* to the bard—"what does it all

prove?" Crabbe often literally answers; and to this trait we cannot but refer the admiration in which this writer was held by Johnson, Gifford, and Jeffrey. These critics often failed to appreciate the more exalted and delicate displays of modern poetry; but in Crabbe there was a pointed sense and tangible meaning that harmonized with their perceptions. Of poets in general we are accustomed to say, that they weave imaginary charms around reality; and, like the wave that sparkles above a wreck, or the flowery turf that conceals a sepulchre, interpose a rosy veil to beguile us from pain. But Crabbe often labours to strip life of its bright dreams, and portrays, with as keen a relish, the anatomical frame as the round and blooming flesh. He bears us not away from the limits of the present by the comprehensive views he presents; but, on the contrary, is continually fixing our attention upon the minute details of existence, and the minor shades of experience. He seeks not to keep out of sight the meaner aspects of life, or relieve, with the glow of imagination, the dark traits of the actual. With a bold and industrious scrutiny he plunges into the gloomy particulars of human wretchedness; and, like some of the Dutch limners, engages our attention, not by the unearthly graces, but the appalling truthfulness of his pictures. Unlike Goldsmith, instead of casting a halo of romance around rustic life, he elaborately exposes its discomforts. He sometimes, indeed, paints the enchantments of love, but often only to contrast them with the worst trials of matrimony; and woman's beauty is frequently described with zest in his pages, only to afford occasion to dwell upon its decay.

It is evident, that to such a writer of verse many of *the loftier* and finer elements of the poet were wanting. *The noble point*, in a mind of this order, is integrity. *The redeeming* sentiment in Crabbe's nature was honesty,

in its broadest and most efficient sense. What he saw he faithfully told. The pictures, clearly displayed to his mind, he copied to the life. He carried into verse a kind of dauntless simplicity, an almost Puritan loyalty to his convictions. He appears like one thoroughly determined to tell the homely truth in rhyme. Poetry has been called the "flower of experience." If we adopt this definition literally, Crabbe has small claims to the name of poet. He searched not so much for the meek violet and the blushing rose, as the weeds and briars that skirt the path of human destiny. Where, then, it may be asked, is his attraction? The picturesque and the affecting do not, as he has demonstrated, exist only in alliance with beauty. The tangled brake may win the eye, in certain moods, as strongly as the garden; and a desolate moor is often more impressive than a verdant hill-side. So rich and mysterious a thing is the human heart, so fearfully interesting is life, that there is a profound meaning in its mere elements. When these are laid bare, there is room for conjecture and discovery. We approach the revelation as we would the fathomless caves of the sea, if they were opened to our gaze. Some of Salvator's landscapes, consisting mainly of a ship's hulk and a lonely strand, are more interesting than a combination of meadow, forest, and temples, by an inferior hand; and, on the same principle, one of Crabbe's free and true sketches is better than the timid composition of a more refined writer. Byron calls him "Nature's sternest painter, yet the best;" and he has been well styled by another, the Hogarth of verse. There is something that excites our veneration in reality, whether in character or literature. "To the poet," says Carlyle, "we say first of all, *see*." And just so far as Crabbe *saw*, (where the *object admits,) he is* poetical. There is a vast range *which he not only* failed to explore, but did not even ap-

proach. There is a world of delicate feeling, and exalted idealism of which he seems to have been almost unconscious. Of the deeper sympathies it may be questioned if he had any real experience. And yet we are to recognise in him no ordinary element of poetry—that insight which enabled him to perceive and to depict in so graphic a style, particular phases of life. We trace, too, in his writings a rare appreciation of many characteristics of our nature. He found these among the ignorant, where passion is poorly disguised, He acted as an interpreter between those whom refinement and social cultivation widely separated. He did much to diminish the force of the proverb, that "one half the world know not how the other half live;" and to direct attention to the actual world and the passing hour, as fraught with an import and an interest, which habit alone prevents us from discovering.

Crabbe was rather a man of science than an enthusiast. He looked upon nature with minute curiosity oftener than with vague delight. This is indicated by many of his descriptions, which are almost as special as the reports of a natural historian. He calls sea-nettles "living jellies," and speaks of kelp as floating on "bladdery beads." Like Friar Lawrence, too, he thought that "muckle is the power and grace that lies in herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities." Through life he was an assiduous collector of botanical and geological specimens. His partiality for detail is exhibited in many of his allusions to the sea-side; and they afford a remarkable contrast to the enlarged and undefined associations, which the same scene awakened in the mind of Byron. Crabbe loved nature, but it was in a very intelligent and *unimpassioned* way. When Lockhart took him to Salisbury Crags, he was interested by their strata far more than the prospect they afforded. How light a way

music held over him, may be realized from the fact that he once wrote the greater part of a poem in a London concert-room, to keep himself awake. The tone of his mind is revealed by the manner in which he wooed the muse. From his own artless letters we cannot but discover that much of his verse was produced by a mechanical process. His best metaphors, he tells us, were inserted after the tale itself was completed. He confesses his surprise that, in two or three instances, he was much affected by what he wrote, which is proof enough of the uninspired spirit in which many of his compositions were conceived. "I rhyme at Hampstead with a great deal of facility," says one of his letters. Accordingly his writings fall much below the works "produced too slowly ever to decay." In fact, with all his peculiar merits, Crabbe was often a mere rhymer, and the cultivated lover of poetry, who feels a delicate reverence for its more perfect models, will find many of his voluminous heroics unimpressive and tedious. But interwoven with these, is many a picture of human misery, many a display of coarse passion and unmitigated grief, of delusive joy and haggard want, of vulgar selfishness and moral truth, that awaken sympathy even to pain, and win admiration for the masterly execution of the artist. Much of the poetry of Crabbe, however, is of such a character that we can conceive of its being written in almost any quantity. He began to write not so much from impulse alone, as motives of self-improvement and interest. When his situation was comfortable, he ceased versifying for a long interval, and resumed the occupation because he was encouraged to do so by the support of the public. Only occasionally, and in particular respects, does he excite wonder. The form and spirit of his works are seldom exalted above ordinary associations. Hence they are more easily imitated, and in the "Re-

jected Addresses," one of the closest parodies is that of Crabbe. The department he originally chose was almost uninvaded, and he was singularly fitted to occupy it with success. In addition to his graphic ability, and the studied fidelity of his portraiture, which were his great intellectual advantages, there were others arising from the warmth and excellence of his heart. He sympathized enough with human nature to understand its weaknesses and wants. His pathos is sometimes inimitable; and superadded to these rare qualifications, we must allow him a felicity of diction, a fluency and propriety in the use of language, which, if it made him sometimes diffuse, at others gave a remarkable freedom and point to his verses.

Illustrations of these qualities abound in Crabbe's writings. His similes convey a good idea of his prevailing tendency to avail himself of prosaic associations, which in ordinary hands, would utterly fail of their intended effect:

> For all that honour brings against the force
> Of headlong passion, aids its rapid course;
> Its slight resistance but provokes the fire,
> As wood-work stops the flame and then convevs it higher,
>
> ---
>
> As various colours in a painted ball
> While it has rest, are seen distinctly all;
> Till whirled around by some exterior force,
> They all are blended in the rapid course;
> So in repose and not by passion swayed,
> We saw the difference by their habits made;
> But tried by strong emotions, they became
> Filled with one love, and were in heart the same.

The following are specimens of his homely minuteness.

> * —— *cold* and wet and driving with the tide,
> *Beats his* weak arms against his tarry side.

* An oysterman.

Hence one his favourite habitation gets,
The brick-floored parlour which the butcher lets,
Where, through his single light, he may regard
The various business of a common yard,
Bounded by backs of buildings formed of clay,
By stables, sties, coops, et cetera.

A BAR ROOM.

Here port in bottles stood, a well-stained row,
Drawn for the evening from the pipe below;
Three powerful spirits filled a parted case,
Some cordial bottles stood in secret place;
Fair acid fruits in nets above were seen,
Her plate was splendid and her glasses clean,
Basins and bowls were ready on the stand,
And measures clattered in her powerful hand.
Here curling fumes in lazy wreaths arise,
And prosing topers rub their winking eyes.

COCK-FIGHTING.

Here the poor bird th' inhuman cocker brings,
Arms his hard heel and clips his golden wings;
With spicy food th' impatient spirit feeds,
And shouts and curses as the battle bleeds.
Struck through the brain, deprived of both his eyes,
The vanquished bird must combat till he dies,
Must faintly peck at his victorious foe,
And reel and stagger at each feeble blow;
When fallen, the savage grasps his dabbled plumes,
His blood-stained arms for other deaths assumes,
And damns the craven fowl that lost his stake,
And only bled and perished for his sake.

---

Fresh were his features, his attire was new,
Clean was his linen, and his jacket blue,
Of finest jean his trowsers tight and trim,
Brushed the large buckle at the silver rim.

---

Twin infants then appear, a girl, a boy,
The o'erflowing cup of Gerard Ablett's joy;
*One had I named in* every year that past,
*Since Gerard wed*,—and twins behold at last!

---

Ah! much I envy thee thy boys who ride
On poplar branch, and canter at thy side;
And girls whose cheeks thy chin's fierce fondness know,
And with fresh beauty at the contact glow.

His fondness for antitheses is often exemplified:

The easy followers in the female train,
Led without love, and captives without chain.

Opposed to these we have a prouder kind,
Rash without heat and without raptures blind.

Hour after hour, men thus contending sit,
Grave without sense, and pointed without wit.

Gained without skill, without inquiry bought,
Lost without love, and borrowed without thought.

It is amusing, with the old complaints of the indefiniteness of poetry fresh in the mind, to encounter such literal rhyming as the following,—a sailor is addressing his recreant mistress:

Nay, speak at once, and Dinah, let me know,
Means't thou to take me, now I'm wreck'd, in tow?
Be fair, nor longer keep me in the dark,
Am I forsaken for a trimmer spark?

Grave Jonas Kindred, Sybil Kindred's sire,
Was six feet high, and look'd six inches higher.

A tender, timid maid, who knew not how
To pass a pig-sty, or to face a cow.

Where one huge, wooden bowl before them stood,
Filled with huge balls of farinaceous food,
With bacon most saline, where never lean
Beneath the brown and bristly rind was seen.

As a male turkey straggling on the green,
When by fierce harriers, terriers, mongrels seen,
He feels the insults of the merry train,
*And moves aside* though filled by much disdain;
*But when that* turkey at his own barn-door,
*Sees one poor straying* puppy and no more,

(A foolish puppy who had left the pack,
Thoughtless what foe was threat'ning at his back,)
He moves about, as ships prepared to sail,
He hoists his proud rotundity of tail,
The half-sealed eyes and changeful neck he shows,
Where in its quickening colours vengeance glows;
From red to blue the pendant wattle turn,
*Blue mixed with red as matches when they burn,*
And thus the intruding snarler to oppose,
Urged by enkindling wrath, he gobbling goes.

No image appears too humble for Crabbe:

For these occasions forth his knowledge sprung,
As mustard quickens on a bed of dung.

When his graphic power is applied to a different order of subjects and accompanied with more sentiment, we behold the legitimate evidences of his title to the name of poet:

Then how serene! when in your favourite room,
Gales from your jasmins soothe the evening gloom,
When from your upland paddock you look down
And just perceive the smoke which hides the town;
When weary peasants at the close of day,
Walk to their cots and part upon the way;
When cattle slowly cross the shallow brook,
And shepherds pen their folds and rest upon their crook.

---

Their's is yon house that holds the parish poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
There, where the putrid vapours flagging play,
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day;
There children dwell who know no parents care,
Parents, who know no childrens' love, dwell there,
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives and mothers never wed;
Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood's fears,
*The lame, the blind*, and far the happiest they,
*The moping idiot* and the madman gay.

---

Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighbouring poor,
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its withered ears;
Rank weeds that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land and rob the blighted rye;
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar,
*And to the ragged infant threaten war,*
There poppies nodding mock the hope of toil,
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
Hardy and high above the slender sheaf,
The shiny mallow waves her silky leaf;
O'er the young shoot the sharlock throws a shade,
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade;
With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
And a sad splendour vainly shines around.
Here joyless roam a wild, amphibious race,
With sullen woe displayed in every face;
Who far from civil arts and social fly,
And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye;
Here, too, the lawless merchant of the main,
Draws from his plough th' intoxicated swain;
Want only claimed the labours of the day,
But vice now steals the nightly rest away.*

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Ye gentle souls who dream of rural ease,
Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please:
Go! if the peaceful cot your praises share,
Go! look within, and ask if peace be there;
If peace be his—that drooping, weary sire,
If theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire;
Or hers—that matron pale, whose trembling hand
*Turns on her wretched hearth the expiring brand.*

No small portion of the interest Crabbe's writings have excited, is to be ascribed to his ingenious stories. Some of them are entertaining from the incidents they narrate, *and others on* account of the sagacious remarks with *which they are* interwoven. These attractions often co-

* *This admirable description refers to Aldeborough, the author's birth-place.*

exist with but a slight degree of poetic merit, beyond correct versification and an occasional metaphor. Most of the tales are founded in real circumstances, and the characters were drawn, with some modification, from existent originals. Scarcely a feature of romance or even improbability belong to these singular narratives. They are usually domestic in their nature, and excite curiosity because so near to common experience. As proofs of inventive genius they are often striking, and if couched in elegant prose or a dramatic form, would, in some cases, be far more effective. Lamb tried the latter experiment in one instance, with marked success.* These rhymed histories of events and personages within the range of ordinary life, seem admirably calculated to win the less imaginative to a love of poetry. Crabbe has proved a most serviceable pioneer to the timid haunters of Parnassus, and decked with alluring trophies, the outskirts of the land of song. We can easily understand how a certain order of minds relish his poems better than any other writings in the same department of literature. There is a singular tone of every-day truth and practical sense about them. They deal with the tangible realities around us. They unfold "the artful workings of a vulgar mind," and depict with amusing exactitude, the hourly trials of existence. A gipsy group, a dissipated burgess, the victims of profligacy, the mean resentments of ignorant minds, a coarse tyrant, a vindictive woman, a fen or a fishing boat—those beings and objects which meet us by the way-side of the world, the common, the real, the more rude elements of life, are set before us in the pages of Crabbe, in the most bold relief and affecting contrast. There is often a gloom, an unrelieved wretchedness, an absolute degradation about these delineations, which weighs upon the spirits—the sadness of a tragedy with-

* The Wife's Trial.

out its ideal grandeur or its poetic consolation. But the redeeming influence of such creations lies in the melancholy but wholesome truths they convey. The mists that shroud the dwellings of the wretched are rolled away, the wounds of the social system are laid bare, and the sternest facts of experience are proclaimed. This process was greatly required in Great Britain when Crabbe appeared as the bard of the poor. He arrayed the dark history of their needs and oppression in a guise which would attract the eye of taste. He led many a luxurious peer to the haunts of poverty. He carried home to the souls of the pampered and proud, a startling revelation of the distress and crime that hung unnoticed around their steps. He fulfilled, in his day, the same benevolent office which, in a different style, has since been so ably continued by Dickens. These two writers have published to the world, the condition of the English poor, in characters of light; and thrown the whole force of their genius into an appeal from the injustice of society and the abuses of civilization.

# SHELLEY.

"Was cradled into poetry by wrong,
And learned in suffering what he taught in song."

It is now about eighteen years since the waters of the Mediterranean closed over one of the most delicately organized and richly endowed beings of our era. A scion of the English aristocracy, the nobility of his soul threw far into the shade all conventional distinctions; while his views of life and standard of action were infinitely broader and more elevated than the narrow limits of caste. Highly imaginative, susceptible and brave, even in boyhood he reverenced the honest convictions of his own mind above success or authority. With a deep thirst for knowledge, he united a profound interest in his race. Highly philosophical in his taste, truth was the prize for which he most earnestly contended; heroical in his temper, freedom he regarded as the dearest boon of existence; of a tender and ardent heart, love was the grand hope and consolation of his being, while beauty formed the most genial element of his existence.

Of such a nature, when viewed in a broad light, were the elements of Shelley's character. Nor is it difficult to reconcile them with the detail of his opinions and the tenor of his life. It is easy to imagine a state of society *in which such a being* might freely develope, and *victoriously realize principles* and endowments so full of pro-

mise; while, on the other hand, it is only necessary to look around on the world as it is, or back upon its past records, to lose all surprise that this fine specimen of humanity was sadly misunderstood and his immediate influence perverted. The happy agency which as an independent thinker and humane poet might have been prophecied of Shelley, presupposed a degree of consideration and sympathy, not to say delicacy and reverence, on the part of society, a wisdom in the process of education, a scope of youthful experience, an entire integrity of treatment, to be encountered only in the dreams of the Utopian. To have elicited in forms of unadulterated good the characteristics of such a nature, "when his being overflowed," the world should have been to him,

> "As a golden chalice to bright wine
> Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust."*

Instead of this, at the first sparkling of that fountain, the teachings of the world, and the lessons of life, were calculated to dam up its free tide in the formal embankments of custom and power. What wonder, then, that it overleaped such barriers, and wound waywardly aside into solitude, to hear no sound "save its own dashings?"

The publication of the posthumous prose† of Shelley, is chiefly interesting from the fact that it perfectly confirms our best impressions of the man. We here trace in his confidential letters, the love and philanthropy to which his muse was devoted. All his literary opinions evidence the same sincerity. His refined admiration of nature, his habits of intense study and moral independence, have not been exaggerated. The noble actions ascribed to him by partial friends, are proved to be the

* Prometheus Unbound.

† *Essays, Letters* from Abroad, Translations and Fragments. *By Percy Bysshe* Shelley. Edited by Mrs. Shelley: London. *1840.*

natural results of his native feelings. The peculiar sufferings of body and mind, of experience and imagination, to which his temperament and destiny subjected him, have in no degree been overstated. His generosity and high ideal of intellectual greatness and human excellence, are more than indicated in the unstudied outpourings of his familiar correspondence.

Love, according to Shelley, is the sum and essence of goodness. While listening to the organ in the Cathedral of Pisa, he sighed that charity instead of faith was not regarded as the substance of universal religion. Self he considered as the poisonous "burr" which especially deformed modern society; and to overthrow this "dark idolatry," he embarked on a lonely but most honourable crusade. The impetuosity of youth doubtless gave to the style of his enterprise an aspect startling to some of his well-meaning fellow-creatures. All social reformers must expect to be misinterpreted and reviled. In the case of Shelley, the great cause for regret is that so few should have paid homage to his pure and sincere intentions; that so many should have credited the countless slanders heaped on his name; and that a nature so gifted and sensitive, should have been selected as the object of such wilful persecution.

The young poet saw men reposing supinely upon dogmas, and hiding cold hearts behind technical creeds, instead of acting out the sublime idea of human brotherhood. His moral sense was shocked at the injustice of society in heaping contumely upon an erring woman, while it recognizes and honours the author of her disgrace. He saddened at the spectacle so often presented, of artificial union in married life, the enforced constancy of unsympathizing beings, hearts dying out in the long struggle of an uncongenial bond. Above all, his benevolent spirit bled for the slavery of the mass—the superab-

tious enthralment of the ignorant many. He looked upon the long procession of his fellow-creatures plodding gloomily on to their graves, conscious of social bondage, yet making no effort for freedom, groaning under self-imposed burdens, yet afraid to cast them off, conceiving better things, yet executing nothing. Many have felt and still feel thus. Shelley aspired to embody in action, and to illustrate in life and literature the reform which his whole nature demanded. He dared to lead forth at a public ball the scorned victim of seduction, and appal the hypocritical crowd by an act of true moral courage. As a boy, he gave evidence of his attachment to liberty by overthrowing a system of school tyranny; and this sentiment, in after life, found scope in his Odes to the Revolutionists of Spain and Italy. He fearlessly discussed the subject of marriage, and argued for abolishing an institution which he sincerely believed perverted the very sentiment upon which it is professedly based. "If I have conformed to the usages of the world, on the score of matrimony," says one of his letters, "it is that disgrace always attaches to the weaker sex." In relation to this and other of his theories, the language of a fine writer in reference to a kindred spirit is justly applicable to Shelley. "He conceived too nobly for his fellows—he raised the standard of morality above the reach of humanity; and, by directing virtue to the most airy and romantic heights, made her paths dangerous, solitary, and impracticable." Shelley entertained a perfect disgust for the consideration attached to wealth, and observed, with impatient grief, the shadow property throws over modest worth and unmoneyed excellence. Upon this sentiment, also, he habitually acted. The maintenance *of his opinions* cost him, among other sacrifices, a fine *estate. So constant* and profuse was his liberality *towards impoverished* men of letters, and the indigent in

general, that he was obliged to live with great economy. He subjected himself to serious inconvenience while in Italy, to assist a friend in introducing steam navigation on the Mediterranean. It was his disposition to glory in and support true merit wherever he found it. He was one of the first to recognize the dawning genius of Mrs. Hemans, to whom he addressed a letter of encouragement when she was a mere girl. He advocated a dietetic reform, from a strong conviction that abstinence from spirituous liquors and animal food, would do much to renovate the human race. Upon this idea his own habits were based. But the most obnoxious of Shelley's avowed opinions, was his non-concurrence in the prevalent system of Religion. To the reflective student of his writings, however, the poet's atheism is very different from what interested critics have made it. School and its associations were inexpressibly trying to his free and sensitive nature; and a series of puzzling questions of a metaphysical character, which he encountered in the course of his recreative reading, planted the seeds of skepticism in his mind, which enforced religious observances and unhappy experience soon fertilized. Queen Mab, the production of a collegian in his teens, is rather an attack upon a creed than Christianity; and was never published with the author's consent. It should be considered as the crude outbreak of juvenile talent eager to make trial of the new weapons furnished by the logic of Eton. Yet it was impertinently dragged into notice to blight the new and rich flowers of his maturer genius, and meanly quoted against Shelley in the chancery suit by which he was deprived of his children. Instead of smiling at its absurdities, or rejecting, with similar reasoning its arguments, the force of authority, the very last to alarm such *a spirit, was alone* resorted to. What wonder if the ar-*dent boy's doubts* of the popular system was increased,

his views of social degradation confirmed; that he came to regard custom as the tyrant of the universe, and proposed to abandon a world from whose bosom he had been basely spurned? If an intense attachment to truth, and an habitual spirit of disinterestedness constitute any part of religion, Shelley was eminently religious. For the divine character portrayed in the Gospels, he probably, in his latter years, had a truer reverence than the majority of Christians. If we are to credit one of his most intimate friends, the Beatitudes constituted his delight and embodied his principles of faith. As far as the Deity is worshipped by a profound sensibility to the wonders and beauty of his universe, a tender love of his creatures and a cherished veneration for the highest revelations of humanity, the calumniated poet was singularly devout. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," is true of human conduct not less in its so called religious than its other aspects. We live in an atmosphere of doubt. To attain to clear and unvarying-convictions, in regard to the mysteries of our being, is not the lot of all. There are those who cannot choose but wonder at the unbounded confidence of theologians. It is comparatively easy to be a church-goer, to conform to religious observances, to acquiesce in prevailing opinions; but to how many all this is but a part of the mere machinery of life! There are those who are slow to profess and quick to feel, who can only bow in meekness, and hope in trembling. Shelley's nature was peculiarly reverential, but he entertained certain speculative doubts—and with the ordinary displays of Christianity he could not sympathize. The popular conception of the Divinity did not meet his wants; and so the world attached to him the brand of atheist, *and, under this* anathema, hunted him down. "The *shapings of our* Heavens," says Lamb, "are the *modifications of our* constitutions." Shelley's ideal nature *modified his* religious sentiment.

"I loved, I know not what; but this low sphere
And all that it contains, contains not thee:
Thou whom seen nowhere, I feel everywhere,
Dim object of my soul's idolatry."*

His Hymn to Intellectual beauty is instinct with the spirit of pure devotion, directed to the highest conception of his nature. Unthinking, indeed, is he who can for a moment believe that such a being could exist without adoration. Dr. Johnson says that Milton grew old without any visible worship. The opinions of Shelley are no more to be regarded as an index to his heart, than the blind bard's quiet musings as a proof that the fire of devotion did not burn within. Shelley's expulsion from college, for questioning the validity of Christianity, or perhaps more justly, asserting its abuses, was the turning point in his destiny. This event, following immediately upon the disappointment of his first attachment, stirred the very depths of his nature—and in all probability, transformed the future man, from a good English squire, to a politician and reformer. Then came his premature marriage, to which impulsive gratitude was the blind motive, the bitter consequences of his error, his divorce and separation from his children, his new and happy connection founded on true affection and intellectual sympathy, his adventurous exile and sudden death. How long, we are tempted to ask in calmly reviewing his life, will it require, in this age of wonders, for the truth to be recognized that opinions are independent of the will, and therefore not, in themselves, legitimate subjects of moral approbation or blame? It has been said that the purposes of men most truly indicate their characters. Where can we find an individual in modern history of more exalted aims than Shelley? While a youth, he was wont *to stray from his* fellows, and thoughtfully resolve

* The Zucca.

"To be wise
And just and free and mild."*

When suffering poverty in London, after his banishment, his benevolence found exercise in the hospitals, which he daily visited to minister to the victims of pain and disease. The object of constant malice, he never degenerated into a satirist.

"Alas, good friend, what profit can you see
In hating such a hateless thing as me?

* * * *

There is no sport in hate, when all the rage
Is on one side.
Of your antipathy
If I am the Narcissus, you are free
To pine into a sound with hating me."†

Though baffled in his plans, and cut off from frequent enjoyment by physical anguish, love and hope still triumphed over misanthropy and despair. He was adored by his friends, and beloved by the poor. Even Byron curbed his passions at Shelley's wise rebuke, hailed him as his better angel, and transfused something of his elevated tone into the later emanations of his genius.

"Fearless he was and scorning all disguise,
What he dared do or think, though men might start,
He spoke with mild yet unaverted eyes;
Liberal he was of soul and frank of heart;
And to his dearest friends, who loved him well,
Whate'er he knew or felt he would impart."‡

And yet this is the man who was disgraced and banned for his opinions—deemed by a court of his country unworthy to educate his own children—disowned by his kindred, and forced from his native land! What a reflection to a candid mind, that slander long prevented *acquaintance and* communion between Shelley and Lamb!

* *Revolt of Islam.* † Sonnet. ‡ Prince Athanase.

How disgusting the thought of those vapid faces of the travelling English, who have done more to disenchant Italy than all her beggars, turned in scorn from the poet, as they encountered him on the Pincian or Lung'Arno! With what indignation do we think of that beautiful head being defaced by a blow! Yet we are told, when Shelley was inquiring for letters at a continental post-office, some ruffian, under colour of the common prejudice, upon hearing his name, struck him to earth.

As a poet Shelley was strikingly original. He maintained the identity of poetry and philosophy; and the bent of his genius seems to have been to present philosophical speculations, and "beautiful idealisms of moral excellence," in poetical forms. He was too fond of looking beyond the obvious and tangible to form a merely descriptive poet, and too metaphysical in his taste to be a purely sentimental one. He has neither the intense egotism of Byron, nor the simple fervour of Burns. In general the scope of his poems is abstract, abounding in wonderful displays of fancy and allegorical invention. Of these qualities, the Revolt of Islam is a striking example. This lack of personality and directness, prevents the poetry of Shelley from impressing the memory like that of Mrs. Hemans' or Moore. His images pass before the mind like frost work at moonlight, strangely beautiful, glittering and rare, but of transient duration, and dream-like interest. Hence, the great body of his poetry can never be popular. Of this he seemed perfectly aware. "Prometheus Unbound," according to his own statement, was composed with a view to a very limited audience; and the "Cenci," which was written according to more popular canons of taste, cost him great labour. The other dramas of Shelley are cast in classical moulds, *not only as to form* but in tone and spirit; and scattered *through them* are some of the most splendid gems of

expression and metaphor to be found in the whole range of English poetry. Although these classical dramas seem to have been most congenial to the poet's taste, there is abundant evidence of his superior capacity in more popular schools of his art. For touching beauty, his "Lines written in Dejection near Naples," is not surpassed by any similar lyric; and his "Sky-Lark" is perfectly buoyant with the very music it commemorates. "Julian and Maddalo" was written according to Leigh Hunt's theory of poetical diction, and is a graceful specimen of that style. But "The Cenci" is the greatest evidence we have of the poet's power over his own genius. Horrible and difficult of refined treatment as is the subject, with what power and tact is it developed! When I beheld the pensive loveliness of Beatrice's portrait at the Barbarini palace, it seemed as if the painter had exhausted the ideal of her story. Shelley's tragedy should be read with that exquisite painting before the imagination. The poet has surrounded it with an interest surpassing the limner's art. For impressive effect upon the reader's mind, exciting the emotions of "terror and pity" which tragedy aims to produce, how few modern dramas can compare with "The Cenci!" Perhaps "Adonais" is the most characteristic of Shelley's poems. It was written under the excitement of sympathy; and while the style and images are peculiar to the poet, an uncommon degree of natural sentiment vivifies this elegy. In dwelling upon its pathetic numbers, we seem to trace in the fate of Keats, thus poetically described, Shelley's own destiny depicted by the instinct of his genius.

"O, weep for Adonais!—The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
*Who* were his flocks, whom near the living streams
*Of his young* spirit he fed, and whom he taught
*The love* which was its music, wander not,—
*Wander* no more.

* * * * * *

'O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart,
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den,
Defenceless as thou wert, oh! where was then
Wisdom the mirror'd shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle when
Thy spirit should have fill'd its cresent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

* * * * * *

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion-kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal.

* * * * * *

He has outsoar'd the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

* * * * * *

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown,
Rose from their thrones built beyond mortal thought
Far in the Unapparent.
'Thou art become one of us,' they cry.

* * * * * *

And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their times decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

* * * * * *

Life, like a dome of many-colour'd glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.

* * * * * *

My spirit's bark is driven
*Far from the shore*, far from the trembling throng
*Whose sails* were never to the tempest given."

The elements of Shelley's genius were rarely mingled. The grand in nature delighted his muse. Volcanoes and glaciers, Alpine summits and rocky caverns filled his fancy. It was his joy to pass the spring-days amid the ruined baths of Caracalla, and to seek the corridors of the Coliseum at moonlight. He loved to watch the growth of thunder-showers, and to chronicle his dreams. German literature, to which he was early attracted, probably originated much of his taste for the wild and wonderful. Plato and the Greek poets, sculpture and solitude, fed his spirit. Such ideas as that of will unconquered by tyranny, the brave endurance of suffering, legends like the "Wandering Jew"—the poetry of evil as depicted in the Book of Job—"Paradise Lost," the story of "Prometheus," and the traditions of "The Cenci," interested him profoundly. He revelled in "the tempestuous loveliness of terror." The sea was Shelley's idol. Some of his happiest hours were passed in a boat. The easy motion,

> "Active without toil or stress,
> Passive without listlessness,"

probably soothed his excitable temperament; while the expanse of wave and sky, the countless phenomena of cloud and billow, and the awful grandeur of storms entranced his soul. Hence his favourite illustrations are drawn from the sea, and many of them are as perfect pearls of poesy as ever the adventurous diver rescued from the deep of imagination. Nor were they obtained without severe struggle and earnest application. Shelley's life was intense, and although only in his thirtieth year when his beloved element wrapped him in the embrace of death, the snows of premature age already flecked *his auburn* locks; and, in sensation and experience, *he was wont to* say, he had far outsped the calendar. *Shelley was* a true disciple of love. He maintained with

rare eloquence the spontaneity and sanctity of the passion, and sought to realize the ideal of his affections with all a poet's earnestness. Alastor typifies the vain search.

Time—the great healer of wounded hearts—the mighty vindicator of injured worth—is rapidly dispersing the mists which have hitherto shrouded the fame of Shelley. Sympathy for his sufferings, and a clearer insight into his motives, are fast redeeming his name and influence. Whatever views his countrymen may entertain, there is a kind of living posterity in this young republic, who judge of genius by a calm study of its fruits, wholly uninfluenced by the distant murmur of local prejudice and party rage. To such, the thought of Shelley is hallowed by the aspirations and spirit of love with which his verse overflows; and in their pilgrimage to the old world, they turn aside from the more august ruins of Rome, to muse reverently upon the poet, where

> "One keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
> Pavilioning the dust of him who plann'd
> This refuge for his memory, doth stand
> Like flame transform'd to marble; and beneath,
> A field is spread, on which a newer band
> *Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,*
> Welcoming him we love with scarce extinguish'd breath."*

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Note.—This article having been censured and misunderstood, the following letter was afterwards published in the Magazine in which it appeared.

"Your letter informing me of the manner in which some of your readers have seen fit to regard my remarks on Shelley, is at hand. I am at a loss to conceive how any candid or discriminating mind can view the article in question as a defence of Shelley's opinions. It was intended rather to place the man himself in a more just point of view, than that which common prejudice assigns him. I only contend that mere opinions—especially those of early youth, do not constitute the only or the best criterion of character. I have spoken in defence rather of Shelley's tendencies *and real purposes*, than of his theories, and endeavoured to

* Adonais.

vindicate what was truly lovely and noble in his nature. To these gifts and graces the many have long been blinded. We have heard much of Shelley's atheistical philosophy and little of his benevolent heart, much of his boyish infidelity and little of his kind acts and elevated sentiments. That I have attempted to call attention to these characteristics of the poet, I cannot regret; and to me such a course seems perfectly consistent with a rejection of his peculiar views of society and religion. These we know were in a great degree visionary and contrary to well-established principles of human nature. Still they were ever undergoing modifications, and his heart often anticipated the noblest teachings of faith. A careful study of the life and writings of Shelley, will narrow the apparent chasm between him and the acknowledged ornaments of our race. It will lead us to trace much that is obnoxious in his views to an aggravated experience of ill, and to discover in the inmost sanctuary of his soul much to venerate and love, much that will sanctify the genius which the careless and bigoted regard as having been wholly desecrated.

"One of your correspondents says, 'I do not pretend to be minutely acquainted with the details of his life, having never read his letters recently published.' And yet, confessedly ignorant of the subject, as he is, he still goes on to repeat and exaggerate the various slanders which have been heaped upon the name of one who I still believe should rank among the most noble characters of modern times. It is not a little surprising that while, in all questions of science, men deem the most careful inquiry requisite to form just conclusions, in those infinitely more subtle and holy inquiries which relate to human character, they do not scruple to yield to the most reckless prejudice. Far otherwise do I look upon such subjects. When an individual has given the most undoubted proof of high and generous character, I reverence human nature too much to credit every scandalous rumour, or acquiesce in the suggestions of malevolent criticism, regarding him. Had your correspondent examined conscientiously the history of Shelley, he would have discovered that he never abandoned his wife, and thus drove her to self-destruction. They were wholly unfit companions. Shelley married her from gratitude, for the kind care she took of him in illness. It was the impulsive act of a generous but thoughtless youth. They separated by mutual consent, *and some* time elapsed before she committed suicide. That *event is said* to have overwhelmed Shelley with grief, not that *he felt himself* in any manner to blame, but that he had not suffi-

ciently considered his wife's incapacity for self-government, and provided by suitable care for so dreadful an exigency. After this event, Shelley married Miss Godwin, with whom he enjoyed uninterrupted domestic felicity during the short remainder of his life. His conduct accorded perfectly with the views, and, in a great measure, with the practice of Milton. With that prying injustice, which characterizes the English press, in relation to persons holding obnoxious opinions, the facts were misrepresented, and Shelley described as one of the most cruel monsters. So much for his views of Religion and Marriage. 'A Friend to Virtue' is shocked at my remark, that 'opinions are not in themselves legitimate subjects of moral approbation or censure.' He should have quoted the whole sentence. The reason adduced is, that they are '*independent of the will.*' This I maintain to be correct. I know not what are the grounds upon which 'A Friend to Virtue' estimates his kind. For myself, it is my honest endeavour to look through the web of opinion, and the environment of circumstances, to the *heart.* Intellectual constitutions differ essentially. They are diversified by more or less imagination and reasoning power, and are greatly influenced by early impressions. Accordingly, it is very rarely that we find two individuals who think precisely alike on any subject. Even in the same person opinions constantly change. Their formation originally depends upon the peculiar traits of mind with which the individual is endowed. His peculiar moral and mental experience afterwards modifies them, so that, except as far as faithful inquiry goes, he is not responsible in the premises. We must then look to the heart, the native disposition, the feelings, if we would really know a man. Thus regarded, Shelley has few equals. Speculatively he may have been an Atheist; in his inmost soul he was a Christian. This may appear paradoxical, but I believe it is more frequently the case than we are aware. An inquiring, argumentative mind, may often fail in attaining settled convictions; while at the same time the moral nature is so true and active, that the heart, as Wordsworth says, may 'do God's word and know it not.' Thus I believe it was with Shelley. Veneration was his predominant sentiment. His biographer and intimate friend, Leigh Hunt, says of him, 'He was pious towards nature—towards his friends—towards the whole human race—towards the meanest insect of the forest.' He did himself an injustice with *the public in using* the popular name of the Supreme Being inconsiderately. He identified it solely with the most tyrannical

notions of God, made after the worst human fashion; and did not sufficiently reflect that it was often used by a juster devotion to express a sense of the Great Mover of the Universe. An impatience in contradicting worldly and pernicious notions of a supernatural power, led his own aspirations to be misconstrued. As has been justly remarked by a writer eminent for his piety—'the greatest want of religious feeling is not to be found among the greatest infidels, but among those who only think of religion as a matter of course.' The more important the proposition, the more he thought himself bound to investigate it; the greater the demand upon his assent, the less upon their own principles of reasoning he thought himself bound to grant it." Logical training was the last to which such a nature as Shelley's should have been subjected. Under this discipline at Oxford, he viewed all subjects through the medium of mere reason. Exceedingly fond of argument, in a spirit of adventurous boldness he turned the weapons furnished him by his teachers, against the venerable form of Christianity, and wrote Queen Mab. Be it remembered, however, he never published it. The MS. was disposed of without his knowledge and against his will. Yet at this very time his fellow-student tells us that Shelley studied fifteen hours a-day—lived chiefly upon bread, in order to save enough from his limited income to assist poor scholars—stopped in his long walks to give an orange to a gipsey-boy, or purchase milk for a destitute child—talked constantly of plans for the amelioration of society—was roused to the warmest indignation by every casual instance of oppression—yielded up his whole soul to the admiration of moral excellence—and worshipped truth in every form with a singleness of heart, and an ardour of feeling, as rare as it was inspiring. He was, according to the same and kindred testimony, wholly unaffected in manner, full of genuine modesty, and possessed by an insatiable thirst for knowledge. Although a devoted student, his heart was unchilled by mental application. He at that time delighted in the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, and loved to believe that all knowledge now acquired is but reminiscence. Gentle and affectionate to all, benevolent to a fault, and deeply loved by all who knew him, it was his misfortune to have an early experience of ill, to be thrown rudely upon the world—to be misunderstood *and slandered*, and especially to indulge the wild speculations of *an ardent mind* without the slightest worldly prudence. Shelley, *phrenologically* speaking, had no organ of cautiousness. Hence

his virtues and graces availed him not in the world, much as they endeared him to those who enjoyed his intimacy. In these remarks I would not be misunderstood. I do not subscribe to Shelley's opinions. I regret that he thought as he did upon many subjects for his own sake as well as for that of society. The great mass of his poetry is not congenial to my taste. And yet these considerations do not blind me to the rare quality of his genius—to the native independence of his mind—to the noble aspirations after the beautiful and the true, which glowed in his soul. I honour Shelley as that rare character—a *sincere* man. I venerate his generous sentiments. I recognize in him qualities which I seldom find among the passive recipients of opinion—the tame followers of routine. I know how much easier it is to conform prudently to social institutions; but, as far as my experience goes, they are full of error, and do great injustice to humanity. I respect the man who in sincerity of purpose discusses their claims, even if I cannot coincide in his views. Nor is this all. I cannot lose sight of the fact, that Shelley's nature is but partially revealed to us. We have as it were, a few stray gleams of his wayward orb. Had it fully risen above the horizon instead of being prematurely quenched in the sea, perchance its beams would have clearly reflected at last, the holy effulgence of the Star of Bethlehem. Let us pity, if we will, the errors of Shelley's judgment; but let not prejudice blind us to his merits. "His life," says his wife, "was spent in arduous study, and in acts of kindness and affection. To see him was to love him." Surely there is a redeeming worth in the memory of one whose bosom was ever ready to support the weary brow of a brother—whose purposes were high and true—whose heart was enamoured of beauty, and devoted to his race:

> ——————if this fail,
> The pillared firmanent is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble.

# LEIGH HUNT.

If the productions of an author afford an insight into his character, we cannot but infer that Leigh Hunt is, in many respects, a delightful man. The writings, from which this inference is drawn, form, probably, but a small proportion of the poet's compositions; still they are sufficient to convey a very definite impression, and afford ample basis for illustrative remark. We are especially justified in such a view from the fact that one, and by no means the least attractive of them, is a charming bit of autobiography, which gives the reader as fair a view of Mr. Hunt's heart, and an epoch or two of his life, as is afforded by the memoirs of Carlo Goldoni, which some critic has affirmed are more amusing than any of his comedies. The ancestral qualities of Leigh Hunt are truly enviable. His father descended from a line of West-India gentlemen, and his mother was the daughter of a Pennsylvania Quaker. Here was a fine mixture of tropical ardour and friendly placidity—of cordial gentility and prudent reserve—of careless cheerfulness and sober method. Both his parents were intellectually disposed; and his mother was partly won by her lover's fine readings of the English poets, which the son truly describes as "a noble kind of courtship." The paternal inheritance of the young author was like the revenue of *Horatio*—a fund of "good-spirits;" and apparently they have enabled him, like Hamlet's friend, to take fortune's

frowns and smiles "with equal thanks." He was, indeed, early inured to the experience of ill; but happily, certain mental antidotes were ever at hand to mitigate the power of evil. His first recollections are associated with the pecuniary embarrassments of his family, and a prison witnessed the sports of his childhood. "We struggled on," he says, 'between quiet and disturbance, placid readings and frightful knocks at the door, sickness and calamity, and hopes that hardly ever forsook us."

It is very obvious, from his truly filial portrait, that the poet's mother had, if any thing, more than an average share in giving a decided bias to his taste. She was a true lover of books and nature; and encouraged her son's poetic and literary tendencies in the sweetest manner. She treasured his early rhymes, carried them about her person, and exhibited them to their intimate friends with maternal pride. What a pleasing reminiscence must this have been to the poet in after life—how much better than a contrary course! What an influence it must have had in confirming his devotion to truth, his love of beauty, his superiority to the world's idols! According to his own confessions, written in the prime of life, poetry; by which we mean the loveliness of external nature, the true delights of society and affection, the creations of genius; all in short that redeems existence and refreshes the soul —has been the chief solace of his days. It has supported him in captivity, it has soothed the irritation of pain, it has made an humble lot independent, it has woven delightful ties with the good and the gifted, and bestowed wings on which he has soared to commune with immortals. In how many bosoms has the same ethereal instinct been extinguished by disdain! We cannot but recall what has often been quoted as a witticism by certain *practical wiseacres*—"that every youth is expected to have *the poetical disease* once in his life as he has the measles,

and his friends rejoice when it is fairly over." It is such inhuman maxims, as far removed even from the philosophy of common-sense as they are from that of truth, that blight the flowers of humanity in the bud. Unfortunately they are too common among us. It was not the intrinsic merit so much as the spirit and the promise of her son's juvenile efforts, that the discerning heart of the mother applauded. Who can estimate the effect such sacred approval exerted? Perchance it made holy and permanent to that young mind what was before only regarded as an agreeable pastime. Not for the prospect of fame it suggested, was that sanction valuable, but because of the dawning sentiment it cherished, the lofty aims it prompted, the elevated tastes to which it gave strength and nurture. Had Leigh Hunt never written a decent couplet afterwards, this course would have been equally praiseworthy. Poetical traits of mind are frequently unallied with felicitous powers of expression. Their value to the individual, are not on this account essentially diminished. Through them is he to sympathize with the grand and lovely in literature, with the beautiful in creation, and the heroic in life. One early word of scorn thoughtlessly cast from revered lips, upon the unfolding sensibility to the poetical, may turn aside into darkness the clearest stream of the soul, may blast the germ of the richest flower on the highway of Time.

Our self-biographer makes sufficiently light of his boyish offerings to the muses, but never for a moment loses his reverence for their trophies, or his thirst for their inspiration. It is evident that these feelings are the source of much of his cheerful philosophy; and that they have kept alive his attachment to imaginative literature, his *fondness* for moral pleasure, his eye for the picturesque *in every day* life, and his soul for genial society. The *truly poetical* heart never grows old. "It is astonishing,"

remarks our author, in speaking of an aged friend of his youth, "how long a cordial pulse will keep playing, if allowed reasonably to have its way." The world wears, like dropping water, upon the prosaic mind, till it becomes petrified and cold. But whosoever has earnestly embraced the opposite creed, shall never fail to see in his kind something to cheer and to interest, as well as to repel and disgust. Let us hear again the testimony of one whose education was poetical: "Great disappointment and exceeding viciousness may talk as they please of the badness of human nature; for my part, I am on the verge of forty; I have seen a good deal of the world, the dark side as well as the light, and I say that human nature is a very good and kindly thing, and capable of all sorts of excellence."

After awaking from his boyhood's dream of authorship, Leigh Hunt turned his talents to account as a journalist. He began by writing theatrical criticisms—the attraction of which was their perfect independence, no small novelty at the period. The habit of thinking for himself, according to his own account, was another blessing to which he was legitimate heir. It is traceable in his literary opinions, which have an air of perfect individuality, and in his theory of versification. Such a characteristic, one of the noblest to which our times give scope, soon brought the adventurous writer into difficulty. He and his brother, the joint proprietors of the "Examiner," were prosecuted for a libel on the Prince-Regent. They would not, as a matter of principle, allow their friends to pay the fine adjudged, and accordingly went to prison. Of this event we have a very graphic account in the biographical sketch. Here too was the bard followed by his better angel as well as his wife. Though deprived of *liberty just at the* moment the state of his health rendered *it most valuable,* though at first disturbed by sights and

sounds of human misery, and sometimes afflicted with illness and depression, yet he managed to fit up his room charmingly, to arrange a garden, to read and make verses, besides being consoled by the presence of his family and the visits of his friends. Indeed when we think of the rare spirits whose converse brightened his confinement, we can almost envy him a captivity, which brought such glorious freedom to his better nature, such mountain liberty to mind and heart.

Some of his epistles contain striking proofs of the pleasure with which he reverted to these kind attentions. At the close of one to Byron, he expresses his grateful recollection of

> " that frank surprise, when Moore and you
> Came to my cage, like warblers, kind and true,
> And told me, with your arts of cordial lying,
> How well I looked, although you thought me dying."

And in another to Charles Lamb, he says:

> " You'll guess why I can't see the snow-covered streets,
> Without thinking of you and your visiting feats,
> When you call to remembrance how you and one more
> When I wanted it most, used to knock at my door;
> And leaving the world to the fogs and the fighters,
> We discussed the pretensions of all sorts of writers."

Soon after his liberation, Mr. Hunt visited Italy. Despite of some pleasing references in his narrative of this absence, it is but too evident that ill-health and domestic cares prevented the poet from thoroughly appreciating the charms of Tuscany. To these causes, and strong home partialities, it is just to ascribe those somewhat unreasonable regrets, for meadows, green lanes and large trees, which appear in his journal. Indeed the writer *hints as much* himself. A wretched winter voyage, and *the melancholy* loss of a generous friend, must have *contributed to* throw many gloomy associations around this

period of his life. Like many an invalid with active endowments, Leigh Hunt has since continued to live, and we doubt not, in a good measure, to enjoy life. He is the father of a large family, and pursues his literary avocations with tasteful devotion. Within a short time he has produced a successful play; and the last result of his labours that has come to our knowledge, is a new edition of some of the old dramatists.

At the outset of his career, his ambition was to excel as a bard. His principal success, however, seems chiefly to lay in a certain vein of essay-writing, in which fancy and familiarity are delightfully combined. Still he has woven many rhymes that are not only sweet and cheerful, but possess a peculiar grace and merit of their own, besides illustrating some capital ideas relative to poetical diction and influence. They are, to be sure, deformed by some offences against the dignity of the muse, in the shape of affectations and far-fetched conceits. It is difficult, if not impossible, to become reconciled to such epithets as "kneadingly," "lumpishly," "surfy massiveness," "waviness" and others of a like character, however applied; and it quite spoils our conception of a nymph, to read of her "side-long hips," and her

> "Smooth, down-arching thigh,
> *Tapering with tremulous mass internally.*"

But such blemishes cannot render the discerning reader insensible to his frequent touches of felicitous description and gleams of delightful fancy. A kindly tone of fellowship and a quick relish of delight, give a fascinating interest to much of his verse. He has aimed to make poetry more frank and social, to set aside the formal mannerism of stately rhyme, and introduce a more friendly and easy style. He eschews the ultra-artificial, *and has frequently* succeeded in giving a spontaneous *flow and airy freedom* to his lines, without neglecting

beauty of thought, or degenerating into carelessness. This is an uncommon achievement. There is a species of verse between the song and the poem, combining the sparkling life of the one with the elaborate imagery of the other, uniting an extemporaneous form with a studied material. In this department Mr. Hunt is no common proficient. He sometimes indeed carries playful simplicity too far. It would require, for instance, a large development of philoprogenitiveness to beget a zest for "Little ranting Johnny;" but the Lines to a Musical Box, are as pretty as the instrument they celebrate:

> "It really seems as if a sprite
> Had struck among us swift and light,
> And come from some minuter star
> To treat us with his pearl guitar."

So the little poem to one of his young children during illness, is a gem of its kind:

> "Sleep breathes at last from out thee,
> My little patient boy;
> And balmy rest about thee
> Smooths off the day's annoy,
> I sit me down and think
> Of all thy winning ways;
> Yet almost wish with sudden shrink,
> That I had less to praise."

The piece being addressed to a boy six years old, should of course be simply expressed; and I have heard fathers praise it, which is proof enough of its cleverness. Mr. Hunt is an advocate for the poetry of cheerfulness. He heartily recognizes the bright spirit of the Grecian bards, and the light hearts that gushed in song in the "merry days" of England. He is no friend to over-speculation or laborious rhyming. He thinks we are designed "to enjoy more than to know," and evokes his muse to celebrate the "sunny side of things," to help him

pass a happy hour, or give those he loves an agreeable surprise. He affords us a view of his philosophy, in an epistle to Hazlitt, which, cheering as it is, savours of the latitude of his Barbadoes ancestors rather than that of London, and has more of the imaginative Southern gentleman about it than the American Quaker:

"One's life, I conceive, might go prettily down
In a due, easy mixture of country and town;—
Not after the fashion of most with two houses,
Who gossip and gape and just follow their spouses,
And let their abode be wherever it will,
Are the same vacant, housekeeping animals still;
But with due sense of each, and of all that it yields,—
In the town, of the town,—in the fields, of the fields.
To tell you the truth, I could spend very well
Whole mornings in this way 'twixt here and Pall Mall,
And make my glove's fingers as black as my hat,
In pulling the books up from this stall and that;—
Then turning home gently through field and o'er stile,
Partly reading a purchase, or rhyming the while,
Take my dinner (to make a long evening) at two,
With a few droppers-in, like my cousin and you,
Who can season the talk with the right-flavoured attic,
Too witty for tattling, too wise for dogmatic;—
Then take down an author whom one of us mentions,
And doat, for awhile, on his jokes or inventions;
Then have Mozart touched, on our battle's completion,
Or one of your fav'rite trim ballads Venetian:—
Then up for a walk before tea, down a valley,
And so to come back through a leafy-wall'd alley;
Then tea made by one (although my wife she be)
If Jove were to drink it, would soon be his Hebe;
Then silence a little,—a creeping twilight,—
Then an egg for your supper, with lettuces white,
And a moon and friend's arm to go home with at night"

Mr. Hunt's ablest production in verse, is the story of Rimini. It is an attempt to convey an affecting narrative through the medium of more idiomatic cast of language and freer versification, than is common to Eng-

lish poetry. Thus regarded, it may justly be pronounced a highly successful poem. Open to criticism, as it unquestionably is considered abstractly, when viewed with reference to the author's theory, and judged by its own law, no reader of taste and sensibility can hesitate to approve as well as admire its execution. The poet seems to have caught the very spirit of his scene. The tale is presented, as we might imagine it to have flowed from an *improvisatore*. Its tone is singularly familiar and fanciful. It is precisely such a poem as we love to read under the trees on a summer afternoon, or in a garden by moonlight. All appearance of effort in the construction is concealed. Some of the descriptive passages are perfect pictures, and the sentiment is portrayed by a feeling hand. We can easily imagine the cool contempt with which a certain class of critics would regard this little work. They would rank it with the music of unfledged warblers, and, from the absence of certain very formal and decided traits, confidently assign it "an immortality of near a week." But there are some rare felicities in this unpretending poem which will always be appreciated. It will touch and please many a young heart yet; and have its due influence in letting down the stilted style of more assuming rhymers. The description of the procession in the first canto, is very spirited and true to life. We can almost see the gaily-adorned knights and prancing horses, and hear

> "Their golden bits keep wrangling as they go."

We can almost behold the expectant princess, as

> "——with an impulse and affection free
> She lays her hand upon her father's knee,
> Who looks upon her with a laboured smile,
> *Gathering* it up into his own the while."

*And we mentally join in the greetings of the multitude, when Paulo*

"——on a milk-white courser, like the air,
A glorious figure, springs into the square."

The appearance of the hero is painted most vividly to the eye, as is the bride's journey to Rimini; and throughout, there is a zest and beauty of imagery, that is redolent of the "sweet south." The consummation of the "fatal passion," is admirably and poetically traced. The author acknowledges his obligations to Dante for the last touch to the picture. The passage will give a fair idea of the poet's manner. The heroine is in her favourite bower, where—

"Ready she sat with one hand to turn o'er
The leaf, to which her thoughts ran on before,
The other propping her white brow and throwing
Its ringlets out, under the skylight glowing,
So sat she fixed; and so observed was she
Of one who at the door stood tenderly,—
Paulo,—who from a window seeing her
Go straight across the lawn, and guessing where,
Had thought she was in tears, and found, that day,
His usual efforts vain to keep away.
'May I come in?' said he: it made her start,—
That smiling voice; she coloured, pressed her heart
A moment, as for breath, and then with free
And usual tone, said, 'O yes,—certainly.'
There's apt to be at conscious times like these,
An affectation of a bright-eyed ease,
An air of something quite serene and sure,
As if to seem so, was to be, secure.
With this the lovers met, with this they spoke,
With this they sat down to the self-same book
And Paulo by degrees gently embraced
With one permitted arm her lovely waist;
And both their cheeks, like peaches on a tree,
Leaned with a touch together, thrillingly;
And o'er the book they hung and nothing said,
And every page grew longer as they read,
*As thus they sat*, and felt with leaps of heart
*Their colour change*, they came upon a part
*Where fond Ginevra*, with her flame long nurst,

Smiled upon Launcelot when he kissed her first:
That touch at last through every fibre slid;
And Paulo turned scarce knowing what he did,
Only he felt he could no more dissemble,
And kissed her mouth to mouth all in a tremble.
Sad were those hearts, and sweet was that long kiss:
Sacred be love from sight whate'er it is,
The world was all forgot, the struggle o'er,
Desperate their joy.—That day they read no more."

Whatever may be deemed the success, as that term is popularly used, of Leigh Hunt, in literature, he may claim the happy distinction of interesting his readers in himself. Let critics pick as many flaws as they will, the pervading good-nature and poetic feeling of the author of Rimini, will ever be recognized. In an age like our own, it is no small triumph for a writer to feel, that, both in practice and precept, he has advocated a cheerful philosophy; that he has celebrated the charms of refined friendship, the unworn attractiveness of fields and flowers, the true amenities of social life, and the delights of imaginative literature. The spirit of our author's life and writings, like that of his friend Lamb, is cheering and beautiful. He manifests a liberal and candid heart. His influence is benign and genial; and the thought of him, even to the strangers to his person on this side of the ocean, is kindly and refreshing.

# BYRON.

THREE thousand copies of Byron's poems are sold annually in this country. Such a fact affords sufficient reason for hazarding some remarks on a theme which may well be deemed exhausted. "My dear sir," said Dr. Johnson, "clear your mind of cant." This process is essential to a right appreciation of Byron. No individual, perhaps, ever more completely "wore his heart upon his sleeve" and no heart was ever more thoroughly pecked at by the daws. The moral aspect of the poet's claims has never been fairly understood. No small class of well-meaning persons avoid his works as if they breathed contagion; whereas it would be difficult to find a poet whose good and evil influence are more distinctly marked. The weeds and flowers, the poisonous gums and "roses steeped in dew," are not inextricably mingled in the garden of his verse. The same frankness and freedom that marked his life, is evident in his productions. It is unjust to call Byron insidious. The sentiments he unveils are not to be misunderstood. They appear in bold relief, and he who runs may read. There is, therefore, a vast deal of cant in much that is said of the moral perversion of the poet. Where he is inspired by low views, the darkness of the fountain tinges the whole stream; and where he yields to the love of the *beautiful, it is* equally apparent. There are those who *would cut off the* young from all acquaintance with his

works, because they are sometimes degraded by unworthy ideas or too truly reflect some of the dark epochs of his life. But it is to be feared that the mind that cannot discriminate between the genuine poetry and the folly and vice of these writings, will be unsafe amid the moral exposure of all life and literature. Indeed, there can scarcely be conceived a book at once more melancholy and more moral than Moore's Life of Byron. It delineates the vain and wretched endeavours of a gifted spirit to find in pleasure what virtue alone can give. It portrays a man of great sensibility, generous impulses and large endowments, attempting to live without settled principle, and be happy without exalted hopes. There is no more touching spectacle in human life. Genius is always attractive ; but when allied to great errors it gives a lesson to the world beyond the preacher's skill. What awful hints lurk in the affected badinage of Byron's journal and letters ! What an idea do they convey of mental struggles ! After reading one of his poems, how significant a moral is his own confession : " I have written this to wring myself from reality." And when he was expostulated with for the misanthropic colouring of his longest and best poems, who can fail to look " more in pity than in anger," upon the bard when he declares " I feel you are right, but I also feel that I am sincere."

The apparent drift of Byron's versified logic is skepticism. He continually preaches hopelessness ; but the actual effect of his poetry seems to me directly the reverse. No bard more emphatically illustrates the absolute need we all have of love and truth. His very wailing is more significant than the rejoicing of tamer minstrels. No one can intelligently commune with his musings and escape the conviction that their dark hues spring from the vain endeavour to reconcile error and the soul. Byron's egotism, his identity with his characters, his cyni-

cism, his want of universality, his perverted creed and fevered impulses have been elaborately unfolded by a host of critics. The indirect, but perhaps not less effective lessons he taught, are seldom recognized. The cant of criticism has blinded many to the noble fervour of his lays devoted to Nature and Freedom. All his utterance is not sneering and sarcastic; and it argues a most uncatholic taste to stamp with a single epithet compositions so versatile in spirit. It is curious to trace the caprice which runs through the habits and opinions of Byron. It should ever be borne in mind in contemplating his character, that in many respects he became, or tried to become, the creature which the world made him. He took a kind of wicked pleasure in adapting himself to the strange portraits which gossips had drawn. Still, with all due allowance for this disposition, the views and acts of the poet were marked by the various contradictions which entered so largely into his nature and fortunes. Compare, for instance, such phrases as "cash is virtue" and "I like a row," with some of his deliberate sentiments embodied in verse. His letters to Murray alone display a constant series of cross directions. Well did he observe "I am like quicksilver and say nothing positively." His opinions on the subject of his own art cannot be made to coincide with each other or with his own practice. He long preferred "Hints from Horace" to the first two cantos of "Childe Harold," prided himself more upon his translations of Pulci than "The Corsair," and declared the "Prophecy of Dante" the best thing he ever wrote. He over-estimated Scott and Crabbe, was blind to the true merit of Keats, and very unreasonable in his deference to Gifford. He charges Campbell with underrating the importance of local authenticity in poetry with a *view to protect* his Gertrude of Wyoming; without *remembering* that his own defence of Pope was induced

by a motive equally selfish. No man reasoned more exclusively from individual consciousness or was oftener biased by personal motives, and yet when the Countess Guiccioli begged him not to continue Don Juan, he complained that it was only because the production threw ridicule upon sentiment, which it was a woman's interest to sustain.

There is a kind of superstition which seems the legitimate result of sentiment. The idea of destiny will generally be found to exercise a powerful sway over persons of strong feeling and vivid fancy. When the mind is highly excited in pursuit of a particular object, or the heart deeply interested in an individual, a thousand vague notions haunt the thoughts. Omens and presentiments, every shadow which whispers of coming events, every emotion which appears to indicate the future is eagerly dwelt upon and magnified. Perhaps such developments are the natural offspring of great sensibility. They are certainly often found in combination with rare powers of intellect and great force of character. Few men more freely acknowledged their influence than Lord Byron. In his case they may have been, in some degree, hereditary. His mother was credulous in the extreme and had the folly to take her son to a fortune-teller. He planted a tree to flourish by at Newstead, and found it, after a long absence, neglected and weedy. He stole a bead amulet from an ill-defined faith in its efficacy. The day after writing his fine apostrophe to Parnassus, he saw a flight of eagles, and hailed the incident as a proof that Apollo was pleased. When leaving Venice, after he had put on his cap and taken his cane, having previously embarked his effects, an inauspicious *mood overtook* him, and he gave orders that if all was *not ready before* one o'clock, to postpone the journey. *He re-called a gift* because it be-tokened ill-luck, and turn-

ed back from a visit upon remembering that it was Friday. He even sent back a coat which a tailor brought him on that day, and yet, with true poetic inconsistency, sailed for Greece on Friday. He cherished the most melancholy associations in regard to the anniversaries of his birth and marriage, and had many strange views of the fate of an only child. But the most remarkable among Byron's many superstitious ideas, was his strong presentiment of an early death. This feeling weighed upon him so heavily that he delayed his departure from Ravenna week after week, in the hope of dissipating so sad a feeling before engaging in his Grecian expedition; and when stress of weather obliged him to return to port, he spoke of the "bad beginning" as ominous. In short, he acknowledged that he sometimes believed "all things depend upon fortune and nothing upon ourselves." How far this tendency to fatalism influenced his conduct it would be difficult to ascertain. But opinions of this nature, grafted upon a constitutional liability to depression, certainly help to explain many of the anomalies of Byron's character.

The physical infirmities of the poet have never been sufficiently considered. No one can read his account of his own sensations without feeling that he was seldom in health. They are not the only sufferers who labour under specific diseases, the ravages of which are obvious to the eye. There is a vast amount of pain and uneasiness, even of a corporeal nature, which is not ranked among the legitimate "ills that flesh is heir to." In nervous persons particularly, how numerous are the trials for which science has discovered no remedy. He used to "fatigue himself into spirits;" and always rose in a melancholy humour; and constantly talks of being "hippish" *and of his liver* being touched, and of having an "*old feel.*" He fancied that like Swift he should "die

at the top," but unlike the Dean, he professed no dread of insanity, but declared "a quiet stage of madness preferable to reason." The withered trees on the Alps reminded him of his family. Often in the presence of the woman he loved, he longed for the solitude of his study. His restlessness, his frequent and rash variations of habits; his wild course of diet, on certain anniversaries eating ham and drinking ale, though they never agreed with him, and then for weeks living upon biscuit and soda-water; his inclinations for violent exercises and craving for stimulants, indicate what a victim he was to morbid sensations. Could we realize the suffering incident to such a constitution, preyed upon as it was by an irritable mind and desponding temper, how much should we find to forgive in the poet's career! We cannot but agree with one of his biographers, that his excesses "arose from carelessness and pride rather than taste." We must bear in mind that he never lost a friend, or cherished his resentments; and take in view that singular blindness which rendered him skeptical as to all literary influence upon character which prompted him to ask, "Who was ever altered by a poem?" His charities were extensive; his philanthropic aims sincere and noble. "Could I have anticipated," he says "the degree of attention which has been accorded me, I would have studied more to deserve it."

When we attempt to group together the trials of Byron, physical and moral, we find an array which claims, not indeed justification, but allowance for his errors. The weakness of her character to whose guidance his childhood was committed, her ungovernable temper, his lameness, the indifference of his guardian, the homeless years he passed between Cambridge and London, his isolated position upon first entering the House of Commons, the ill-accordance of his pecuniary means with his rank, the

unjust criticism that his first early efforts elicited, his return after two years' travel to encounter bereavements, which induced him to write—"at three and twenty I am left alone, without a hope, almost without a desire; other men can take refuge in their families, I have no resource but my own reflections;" and, to crown all, his unfortunate marriage and the social persecution he endured; his long siege of bailiffs and domestic spies—make up a catalogue of troubles which might have driven a meeker being into despairing error. But he was acquainted through the whole of his brief life with a grief which, however the cynic and the sage may sneer, was to him a real and wasting sorrow. His affections craved an object which was never granted them. His frequent allusion to his boyish love, his regrets over that dream when "both were young and one was beautiful," his capricious amours on the continent, mingled with the ardent longings with which his poetry overflows, prove him to have been a devotee of that "faith whose martyrs are a broken heart." This unsatisfied love was a fountain of tender desire in his bosom, which fertilized and softened his effusions, and to which is ascribable their most pathetic touches. It is in seeking an "ocean for the river of his thoughts" that he bears so many hearts along in the rash bewildering emotion.

The poetry of Byron is the result of passion and reflection. He is not so much a creator as a painter, and his pictures are drawn from feeling and thought rather than nicety of observation. "I can't furbish," says one of his letters. "I am like the tiger, if I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle." He gives us, as it were, the *sensation* of a place or a passion. Take, for instance, such epithets as "the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone," and "battle's magnifi-

cently-stern array"—how vividly do they make us sensible of the scenes described! He says "high mountains are a feeling;" everything in the universe and in life which appealed to his sympathies was to him a feeling. It was scarcely allegorical for him to call himself "a portion of the tempest," or to exclaim,

"I live not in myself, but I become a portion of that around me!"

It seems, therefore, very irrational for the admirers of a more calm and descriptive class of poets to moralise over Byron's feverish style, as if poetry was not subject to the laws of mental development. He might, indeed, have refrained from writing or publishing, but the condition upon which alone his mind could gush forth in poetry, was that its fruits should bear the qualities of the man. He was remarkably susceptible to immediate impressions, of a melancholic disposition and earnest feelings; and these traits of character necessarily coloured his poetry; indeed it owes to them its distinguishing beauties. Through them he was placed in that intimate relation with what he saw that enabled him to give us the fervid and stirring impressions of Childe Harold; to address with the eloquence of profound sympathy, Parnassus and Waterloo, Greece and Lake Leman, Rome and the Ocean, the Apollo and Solitude, the Stars and the Dying Gladiator. "I could not," he says, "write upon anything without some personal experience for a foundation."

The career of this impetuous, but in more than one sense, noble being, is traced in his works most clearly. The very poems whose influence is deemed so baneful, have a moral eloquence few homilies can boast. What lesson has human life so impressive as the wanderings of *genius reflected in its* creations? Turn from the elevated *beauty of Byron's* effusions written in Switzerland, amid *that exalting air and scenery* ... Shelley, as he used to

say, "dosed him with Wordsworth," to the flippant and low rhymes, strung together in the intervals of dissipation at Venice; read the outpourings of his soul in the pensive hour of solitary reminiscence, and the bitter lines provoked by resentful emotion; contemplate a glowing description caught from deep communion with some scene of historical interest or natural grandeur, and the weak impromptu wrung from a day of ennui and self-disgust; and can anything impart so powerful an impression of the transcendant worth of truth? "O the pity of it, the pity of it!" we exclaim with the Moor; and just in proportion as we admire the strength of the wing that bears us through the realms of song, do we feel the misery of every unworthy flight. In the same degree that we sympathise with genius do we contemn the darkness which shrouds from view "the unreached paradise of its despair." If to some weak minds the errors of high natures are made venial by its gifts, to many of healthier tone they become thrice detestable, because of the brightness they mar. The antidote more frequently accompanies the bane than narrow moralists are willing to admit. It will not do to prescribe the style of poetic development. Its moral characteristics are indeed legitimate subjects of criticism, rebuke or praise; but whether a bard's effusions are passionate or calm, descriptive or metaphysical, festive or sad, depends upon the spirit whence they spring. It is the nature of a willow to droop, and an oak to fling out its green branches sturdily to the gale. Byron, with his earnest temper, his undisciplined mind, his impassioned heart, could not have written with the philosophic quietude of Wordsworth. It is absurd to lament that his verse is impassioned; such was its legitimate form. And is there not an epoch of passion in every *human life? Is it* not desirable that the poetry of that *era should be written?* Cannot these men of even pulse *and serene temper* permit beings of a more enthusiastic

mood to have their poetic mirror also? Byron represents an actual phase of the soul's life; not its whole nor its highest experience, but still a real and most interesting portion of its development. He is not the unnatural painter which many critics would fain make him. In many a youthful heart do his truest appeals find an immediate response. Even the misanthropy with which his writings are imbued is not all morbid and undesirable. How much is there of lofty promise in the very discontent he utters! How does it whisper of desires too vast for time, of aspirations which pleasure and fame cannot satisfy. How often does it reveal an infinite necessity for love, an eternal tendency to progress! Misanthrophy has its poetry as well as pleasure; and the eloquent complaints of Byron have brought home to countless hearts a deeper conviction of the absolute need of truth and self-respect than any logical argument. If a few shallow imitators are silly enough to turn down their collars and drink gin, there is another class who mentally exclaim as they read Byron—"What infinite longings are these! what sensibility to beauty! what capacities of suffering! how fatal is error to such a being! let me, of kindred clay, look earnestly for a lofty faith, a safe channel for passion, a serene haven for thought!" The poet's torch is not always a meteor, alluring only to betray, but a beacon-light warning the lover of genius from the rocks and quick-sands which made him desolate. Besides, enough confidence is not felt in the native sense and just sentiments of readers. Can we not yield our hearts to the thrilling address to Lake Leman without being pledged thereby to adopt the creed of Don Juan? Can we not accept Byron's tribute to the Venus and Dying Gladiator without approving his bacchanal orgies at Newstead? May we not enjoy the wild freedom of the Corsair, without emulating the example of the hero "of one virtue and a thousand crimes"?

# MOORE.

Poetry seems as capricious in her alliances as opinion. She is as frequently wedded to gladness as to gloom. When we recall the fortunes and character of her votaries, it seems impossible that an element so peculiar should co-exist with such opposite tendencies of mind and traits of feeling. Like the mysterious combinations of light, which yields a verdant gloom to the cypress, and a rosy hue to the cloud, with one lucent effluence producing innumerable tints, the spirit of poetry assimilates with every variety of human sentiment, from the deepest shadows of misanthropy to the freshest bloom of delight. She elevated the stern will of Dante into grandeur, and softened the passion of Laura's lover into grace. In some buoyant child of the south, she appears like a playful nymph, crowned with roses; and breathes over a northern harp like an autumn wind sighing through a forest of pines. She brooded with melancholy wildness over the soul of Byron, and scattered only flowers in the path of Metastasio. Alternately she wears the complacent smile of an Epicurean and the cold frown of a stoic. Now she seems a blessing, and now a bane; inspires one with heroism, and enervates another with delight; sometimes reminds us of the ocean, waywardly heaving a hapless barque, and again wears the semblance of a peaceful *stream, in whose clear* waters the orbs of heaven seem to *slumber.* *Thus* poetry follows the universal law of con-

trast, and is true to the phases of life. She not only reflects the different orders of character, but the changeful moods of each individual; appeals to every class of sympathies, and adapts herself to every peculiarity of experience. She has an echo for our glee, and an accompaniment for our sadness; she can exalt the reverie of the philosopher, and glorify the lover's dreams; kneel with the devout, and swell the mirth of the banquet; attune the solemn harmony of a Milton, and the melodious sweetness of a Moore.

With the prevailing thoughtfulness that belongs to British poetry, it is striking to contrast the brilliancy of Moore. He seems to bring the vivacious and kindly genius of his country, with an honest and cheerful pride, into the more stately ranks of the English minstrels. His sparkling conceits and sentimental luxury have a southern flavour. They breathe of pleasure. Even when pathetic their influence is the same, for grief is robbed of its poignancy and soothed into peace. The severity of thought, the strain of high excitement, the tumult of passion, are alike avoided. We are not carried to the misty heights of contemplation, nor along the formal paths of detail; but are left to saunter through balmy meadows or repose in delicious groves. If sometimes a painful idea is evolved, a musical rhyme or bright image at once harmonizes the picture. We are seldom permitted to realise the *poem*, so constantly is maintained the idea of the *song*. An impression such as the voluntary numbers of the troubadour convey, like the overflowing of a lightsome yet imaginative spirit, continually pervades us. No wrestling with the great mysteries of being, no studied attempts to reach the height of some "great argument," characterize the song of Moore, but a melodious dalliance *with memory* and hope, a gay or pensive flight above the *toilsome* and the actual into the free domain of romance.

With all these attractions, the poetry of Moore is in no small degree artificial. The highest, as well as the most touching song, is undoubtedly that which springs warmly from the poet's life and emotions. This is, without doubt, the case with many of the effusions of the bard of Erin; on the other hand, we frequently meet in his pages with gems brought from afar, beauties that obviously have been garnered, rather than naturally suggested. Lalla Rookh, for instance, is the result of the author's gleanings amid the traditions and natural history of the East. His treasures are used, indeed, with consummate skill, and no process but the meditative workings of a glowing mind could have blended them into pictures of such radiant beauty. Still, it is well to feel the distinction which obtains between the poetry of the artist and the poetry of the man. It argues no ordinary facility and creativeness, for a minstrel to deliberately plan a work, as an architect does a temple; and then, having collected the materials of the fabric, proceed to rear a harmonious and delightful structure. But there is a process in the art more divine than this. It is that of the bard who obeys, like a prophet, the call of inspiration, utters chiefly what his own heart pleads to express, and throws into his poem the sincere teachings of his inmost life. In such poetry there is a spell of no transient power. It comes home to our highest experience. It is eminently suggestive. Like the echo of the mountains, it is full of lofty intimations. To this species of poetry Moore has but slightly contributed. His general tone is comparatively superficial. Fancy is his great characteristic. This is the quality which gives such a sparkling grace to his verse. Like the corruscations of frost-work and the phosphorescence of the sea, his fanciful charms play *around and fascinate* us; they give a zest to the passing *hour, and kindle* bright illusions in the monotonous cir-

cuit of existence; but they seldom beam with the serene and enduring light of the stars. Moore is too much the creature of social and fashionable life to attain the highest range of Parnassus. He is necessarily, to some degree, conventional. His associations rarely transcend the present and prevailing in thought. In the Vale of Cashmere he does not forget the "mirror," and amid the "light of other days," his memory is busy with the "banquet hall." Moore especially deserves the title of accomplished. He is no rough ploughman, with nothing but the hills and firmament, a rustic charmer or a crushed daisy, to awaken his muse; he is no discontented peer, seeking in foreign adventure freedom from social shackles; but a cordial gentleman, ever ready with his pleasant repartee and his graceful song. He appears to equal advantage at the literary dinner and in the fashionable drawing-room; as a guide through the delicious labyrinths of oriental romance, and a companion at the festive board; as a poet, a friend, and a man of the world. He is one of those men who seem born to ornament as well as to delight; to give a new grace to pleasure and an imaginative glow to social life. There is room for constant discrimination in estimating Moore. He has written a mass of verses which are of temporary interest, and of so little merit that we cannot choose but wonder that he should annex them to his more finished productions. "Lalla Rookh" and the "Loves of the Angels" are the best of his long compositions, and of these the beautiful episode of "Paradise and the Peri" bears the most brilliant traces of his genius. His fame, however, will doubtless rest eventually on the "Melodies." It is to be regretted that so many evidences of hasty and casual impressions, at once immature and injudicious, should appear among the gems of such a minstrel. His notices of this country, for instance, founded on the most mea-

gre observation, are scarcely worthy of a liberal mind; and had the poet conscientiously examined the causes of the revolutionary failure of the Neapolitans, he would not have had the heart to write of a people so much "more sinned against than sinning," so cruel an anathema as, "Ay, down to the dust with them, slaves as they are." The metaphors of this poet admirably illustrate his power of fancy, indicated in the felicitous comparison of natural facts to moral qualities. In one of his dinner speeches, complimenting his hearers on their superiority to party malevolence, he says their "noble natures, in the worst of times, would come out of the conflict of public opinion, like pebbles out of the ocean, more smooth and more polished by the very agitation in which they had been revolving." And on the same occasion, speaking of Byron's disposition "to wander only among the ruins of the heart," he says that "like the chestnut tree that grows best in volcanic soils, he luxuriates most where the conflagration of passion has left its mark." Joyful moments in the midst of misery he compares to

> ——"those verdant spots that bloom
> Around the crater's burning lips,
> Sweetening the very edge of doom."

Among numerous similar examples are the following:

> "In every glance there broke, without control,
> The flashes of a bright but troubled soul,
> Where sensibility still wildly played,
> *Like lightning round the ruins it had made.*"

> "Oh, colder than the wind that freezes
> Founts, that but now in sunshine played,
> Is that congealing pang which seizes
> The trusting bosom when betrayed."

> ——"to see
> *Those virtuous* eyes forever turned on me
> *And in their* light re-chastened silently,

*Like the stained web that whitens in the sun,*
*Grow pure by being purely shone upon."*

Music is a great element of Moore's poetry. How few have succeeded so well in softening the Teutonic jar of our language, and giving a flow to the verse and a cadence to the rhythm, like the liquid tongues of the south! And what an ineffable charm has the melody given to his song! He compares his verses to "flies preserved in amber." So beguiling is the greater portion of the music that we can scarcely give a calm examination to the poems with which it is indissolubly associated. In this respect Moore enjoys a signal advantage. There is an anecdote of an ancient dame who refused to sanction the publication of her deceased partner's sermons, "because they couldn't print the *tone* with them." In poetry, how much depends upon the reader's *tone*, both of voice and of mind! How many noble pieces of verse slumber in obscurity for want of an oral interpreter! Elocutionary skill has revealed beauties in poetry of which even the author never dreamed. The sweetest of Moore's effusions are allied to delightful music. Sense and soul are simultaneously addressed, and perhaps no modern bard has been more widely *felt* as well as acknowledged to be a poet. In the gay saloon, on the lonely sea, from the lips of the lady and the peasant, the student and the sailor, the lover and the hero, how often have breathed such airs as "The Meeting of the Waters," "Love's Young Dream," "Come rest in this bosom," "Oft in the Stilly Night," "Come, ye Disconsolate," "Sound the Loud Timbrel," "Mary's Tears," and others as familiar in bower and hall. Thousands have responded to the sentiment of Byron:

"Were't the last drop in the well,
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'T is to *thee* that I would drink.

"In that water, as this wine,
The libation I would pour
Should be—Peace to thine and mine,
And a health to *thee, Tom Moore!*"

There is certainly something real and grateful in such fame, and it is not surprising that Moore declares he has no idea of poetry, disconnected with music.

The national associations connected with the poetry of Moore greatly enhance its attractions. As the bard of a depressed but noble people, whose sufferings are only equalled by their heartiness and hardihoood, he claims universal sympathy. We cannot but remember that his strains breathe of a land so lovely and so impoverished that it has been aptly called Paradise Lost. In those touching melodies which seem to embalm the fresh soul of Erin in the days of her strength, what fervent appeals are there to every loyal and benevolent heart! Indeed the very fact of gathering from the cotter's fireside, from moor and valley and sequestered glen, the wild and melting notes of old Irish song, and wedding them to the language of modern refinement, strikes us as one of the most romantic enterprises of modern poetry. If an Italian painting, a Moorish fountain and an Egyptian pyramid affect us, as the surviving and beautiful memorials of a nation's better day, how much more should we recognize the eloquent and simple music of a distant era, in which the glow of love, patriotism and grief is yet warm and thrilling! Not less in his personal traits than his muse does Moore illustrate his country; his patriotism, convivial talents and kindly feelings are equally characteristic. As the popular bard of Ireland, his position is singularly desirable. He is not lost in a crowd of versifiers and associated with a local school, but strikes the imagination *as the poetical representative* of a great and unfortunate *nation. With the groans that echo from her afflicted*

shores his notes of fancy and feeling mingle, to remind us of the high and warm traits of the Irish heart, and of the flowers of genius still blooming amid the gloom of her distress. Well may he sing—

"Dear harp of my country! in darkness I found thee!
The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long,
When proudly, my own Island harp! I unbound thee,
And gave all thy chords to light, freedom and song!"

# ROGERS.

Such a quiet attribute as taste is not very efficient at a period like the present. And yet it is one of those qualities which go far toward perpetuating a poem as well as a statue or painting. We are now so accustomed to look for the rare and striking in literature, that the very principle which harmonizes and stamps with enduring beauty the effusions of mind, is scarcely appreciated. It is chiefly to the past that we must look for poetic taste. Recent bards have but seldom done justice to the form and manner of their writings. There is something, however, in a refined style and tasteful execution not unworthy the highest genius. It is due at least to that magic vehicle of ideas which we call language, that it should be wrought and polished into a shape fitted to enshrine the glowing image and the lofty thought. Many a work, the sentiment of which is without significance in this busy age, continues to delight from its artistical excellence, and much of the literature of the day, that bears the impress of genius, is destined to speedy oblivion, from its unfinished and ill-constructed diction. There is no little scope for sweet fancy and delicate feeling in the use of language. Not in his ideas and figures alone is the poet manifest. Indeed, it is as rare to find a good artist in the sphere of words and sentences as in that of *marble and colours*. Some ingenious philosophers have *pointed out analogies* between styles of writing and char-

acter, which suggest a much more delicate relation between the mind and its verbal expression than we generally suppose. Taste is no minor element of poetry; and the want of it has often checked the musical flow of gifted spirits, and rendered their development wholly unattractive. The epithet *healthy* has been applied with great meaning to a book. Of the same efficacy is taste in poetic efforts. It renders them palatable and engaging, it wins our regard immediately, and gives double zest to the more imposing charms of the work. It is like a fine accompaniment in music; the sentiment of the song is heightened, and we cannot thenceforth even read it without a peculiar association of pleasure. Rogers is distinguished by no quality more obviously than that of taste. His general characteristics are not very impressive or startling. There are few high reflective beauties, such as win reverence for the bard of Rydal Mount, and scarcely an inkling of the impassioned force of Childe Harold. We are not warmed in his pages, by the lyric fire of Campbell, or softened by the tender rhapsodies of Burns; and yet the poetry of Rogers is very pleasing. It gains upon the heart by gentle encroachments. It commends itself by perfect freedom from rugged, strained and unskilful versification. It is, for the most part, so flowing and graceful that it charms us unaware. Without brilliant flashes or luxuriant imagery, it is still clear, free and harmonious. It succeeds by virtue of simplicity, by unpretending beauty; in a word, by the genuine taste which guides the poet, both in his eye for the beautiful, and the expression of his feelings. Great ideas are not often encountered in his poems, but purity of utterance and a true refinement of sentiment everywhere abound.

*There is* perhaps no Englishman who, by such univer*sal consent, is* more worthy the appellation of a man of *taste. This* tone of mind is the more remarkable, mas-

much as it has no connection with professional life. The ostensible pursuit of Mr. Rogers has no reference to his intellectual bias, except in having furnished him the means of mental gratification. Like his transatlantic prototype in the brotherhood of song, a good portion of his life is, or has been,

—"to life's coarse service sold,
Where thought lies barren, and nought breeds but gold"

His taste is the spontaneous and native quality of a refined mind. It has made him a discriminating collector of literary treasures and trophies of art, the liberal patron of struggling genius, the correspondent of the gifted and the renowned, and the centre of a circle where wit and wisdom lend wings to time. It is in contemplating such a life as this that the most philosophic and unworldly may be forgiven for breathing a sigh for that wealth, which a cultivated man can thus render the source of such noble enjoyment. And yet the very feeling that such an example awakens is an evidence of its rarity. How seldom in a mercantile community do we find fortune associated with taste, a competence with a mind able to enjoy and improve leisure, the means of dispensing worthy delight, with a benevolent and judicious character! An exception to the prevailing rule is presented by our poet; and even those who have not participated in his elegant hospitality and graceful companionship, may realize that pervading taste whence is derived their peculiar charm, by communing with the mind of the classic banker, in the sweet effusions of his muse.

The excellent taste of Rogers is exhibited in his simplicity. He does not seek for that false effect which is produced by laboured epithets and unusual terms. He is content to use good Saxon phraseology, and let his meaning appear through the transparent medium of common but appropriate words. He recognizes the truth that dis-

tinct and clear enunciation of thought is the most beautiful, and that a writer's superiority is best evinced by the nice adaptation of language to sentiment. Obvious as such a principle is, there is none more commonly violated by the more showy minstrels of this generation, who seem to place great reliance on a kind of verbal mysticism, a vagueness of speech which, upon examination, proves but the dazzling attire of commonplace ideas. Instances of this simplicity are of frequent occurrence in the poems of Rogers. Their value is illustrated by the quiet emphasis of single lines, which, like a masterly stroke of the pencil, appear so felicitous that no revision can improve them. A few random examples will suffice—

When nature pleased, for life itself was new,
*And the heart promised what the fancy drew.*

—

How oft, when purple evening tinged the west,
*We watched the emmet to her grainy nest,*
Welcomed the wild bee home on weary wing,
Laden with sweets, the choicest of the spring!
How oft inscribed, with Friendship's votive rhyme,
*The bark now silvered by the touch of Time;*
Soared in the swing, half pleased and half afraid,
Through sister elms that waved their summer shade;
Or strewed with crumbs yon root-inwoven seat,
To lure the redbreast from her lone retreat!

—

When pensive Twilight, in her dusky car,
*Comes slowly on to meet the evening star*

—

Far from the joyless glare, the maddening strife,
*And all the dull impertinence of life.*

—

Mute is the bell that rung at peep of dawn,
*Quickening my truant feet across the lawn.*

—

*But not* till Time has calmed the ruffled breast,
*And those* fond dreams of happiness confest,
*Not till the rushing winds forget to rave*
*In Heaven's sweet smile reflected on the wave.*

With all due admiration for the loftier flights of the Muse, we cannot revert to the purer school of poetic diction which Rogers represents, without a feeling of refreshment. The simple, the correct, the clear and nervous style of versification has an intrinsic charm. The genuine taste in which it originates and to which it ministers, is an instinct of refined natures. It is the same principle that makes a Grecian temple more truly admirable in its chaste proportions and uniform tint, than all the brilliant hues and combinations of a Catholic church; and renders a classic statue more pleasing and impressive than the most ingenious mechanism. And it is from the same cause that the paintings of the Roman and Tuscan schools leave more vivid traces on the memory than the gorgeous triumphs of Venetian art. By virtue of their confidence in the feeling or thought to be presented, men of real taste are ever true to simplicity. They rely on the plain statement and the reader's imagination, and produce by a single comparison or remark an impression which more elaborate terms would greatly weaken. For instance, when Rogers describes the scenery of the Alps, speaking of one of those pools that have so dark an appearance amid the surrounding whiteness, he says—

> . . . . in that dreary dale,
> If dale it might be called, so near to Heaven,
> A little lake, *where never fish leaped up,*
> *Lay like a spot of ink amid the snow*

How completely is a sense of the dreariness and ebon hue of these mountain ponds conveyed, and by what natural illustrations. The diminutive size of St. Helena is thus indicated—

> . . . . a rock so small,
> *Amid the* countless multitude of waves,
> *That ships have gone and sought it, and returned,*
> *Saying it was not.*

The wild solitude of the convent of St. Bernard has been often described, as well as its awful place of sepulture. Do not these few lines give us a remarkably vivid idea of those who "perished miserably?"

> . . . . Side by side,
> Within they lie, a mournful company,
> All in their shrouds, no earth to cover them,
> In the broad day, nor soon to suffer change,
> Through the barred windows, *barred against the wolf*,
> Are always open!

Speaking of the festive preparations on St. Mary's Eve, how expressive is this single circumstance—

> . . . . all arrived;
> *And in his straw the prisoner turned and listened,*
> *So great the stir in Venice.*

Whoever has visited that extraordinary city will feel that it is pictured by Rogers, not in the most glowing, yet in a style of graphic truth, which accords perfectly with the real scene—

> There is a glorious City of the Sea,
> The sea is in the broad, the narrow streets,
> Ebbing and flowing: and the salt sea-weed
> Clings to the marble of her palaces.
> No track of men, no footsteps to and fro,
> Lead to her gates. The path lies o'er the sea,
> Invisible; and from the land we went
> As to a floating city—steering in,
> And gliding up her streets as in a dream,
> So smoothly, silently—by many a dome
> Mosque-like, and many a stately portico,
> The statues ranged along an azure sky;
> By many a pile of more than Eastern splendour,
> Of old the residence of merchant kings;
> The fronts of some, though Time had shattered them,
> Still glowing with the richest hues of art,
> *As though* the wealth within them had run o'er.

*In an argument* we have need of strong epithets, and

to rouse men on an abstract theme, fervid appeals are unavoidable, but in view of the marvels of art or the sublimities of nature, what call is there for exaggeration? To the true soul is not the fact sufficient? Can expletives and strained metaphors add to the native interest of such objects? Are they not themselves poetry? Is not the poet's office in relation to them, to give us as true a picture as may be, that we too may thrill with wonder or revel in beauty? Even in portraying deep emotion our great dramatist was satisfied to place in Macduff's mouth—"He has no children!" And it is equally true to human nature, for Rogers to speak of Ginevra's bereaved father as—

> An old man wandering in quest of something,
> Something he could not find—he knew not what.

Another evidence of the good judgment of Rogers may be found in the fact that he has published so little. It is the fashion to chide the authors of a few successful poems for their idleness. Some deem it a very pretty compliment to say of a poet that his only fault is that he has not written more. But such praise is equivocal, to say the least. It betrays a singular ignorance of the very nature of poetry, which may be defined as an art above the will. Doubtless if fine poems were as easily produced as fine rail-roads, it would be incumbent on the makers thereof to be very industrious in their vocation. But as the activity of the fancy and the flow of thought are but occasionally felicitous, some degree of reverence should be accorded the poet who having once struck the lyre to a masterly strain, thenceforth meekly refrains from any rash meddling with its chords, without that authority which his own heart can alone vouchsafe. Occasional witticisms have been indulged in reference to the coyness and care with which the bard of Memory woos the Mu-

ses. To a delicate and considerate mind such a course approves itself far more than the opposite. How many desirable reputations have been sacrificed to the morbid vanity of unceasing authorship! The creative power of every intellect is limited, its peculiar vein is soon exhausted, and its most ethereal powers may not be too frequently invoked without vapid results. We have heard of an old lady who had a celebrated bishop to dine with her every Sunday, and invariably on these occasions, his worship inquired how her ladyship would have the punch made; to which polite query, the good woman always gave the same judicious reply—"Make a *little*, bishop, but make it *good*." Such a rule would often serve as well for poetry as for punch.

Rogers, in point of execution, belongs to the same category as Goldsmith. He has the requisite insight to copy from nature what is really adapted to poetical objects, to harmonize and enliven his pencilings with genial sentiment, and finally to present them in a form that charms the ear and imagination. The spirit of his poetry is not of the highest order. His talent is artistical rather than inventive. He is a clear delineator rather than a creative genius. A remarkable contrast is presented by his "Italy" and the fourth canto of Childe Harold. The former gives us a just and sweet picture of the graces and griefs of that beautiful land, as they were reflected in the mind of an amiable man of taste; the latter displays the same country, seen through the medium of an impassioned and self-occupied soul. Rogers looked upon the vale and river, the palace and the statue, the past and present associations of Italy, from the calm watch-tower of a serene consciousness; Byron *surveyed* those scenes as a restless seeker for peace, with *a mind too excited* and unsatisfied not to mingle with and *colour every fact* and object with which it came in contact. There is a wild and melancholy beauty in Harold's

musings that appeals to our deepest sympathy; a repose and pleasurable calm in those of Rogers, that soothes and diverts us. Something of tragic impression and strong personal interest carries us along with Byron in his pilgrimage, while a quiet attachment and agreeable fellowship win us to follow the steps of Rogers.

The blank verse of "Italy" is of a somewhat uncommon description. In English poetry, this species of metre has generally been written in a sustained and dignified manner, and some passages of Shakspere and Milton prove that there is no style so fitted for sublime effect. Rogers essayed to give a more easy and familiar construction to blank verse, and the attempt was remarkably successful. Occasionally the lines are prosaic, and scarcely elevated to the tone of legitimate verse; but often there is a natural and sweet cadence which is worthy of the most harmonious bard. The example, too, has obviously tended to chasten and render more simple the management of this kind of verse. In this respect, Rogers has illustrated blank verse as Hunt has the heroic measure. They have exemplified a less stilted and artificial use of poetic language. The poem of the former has, indeed, an epistolary character. It is precisely such a series of genial sketches as an artist might send his friends from a foreign country—light, graceful and true to nature, but pretending to no great or elaborate conceptions. In this, as in his other efforts, Rogers is often somewhat tame, and frequently lacks fire and point; but the mass of what he has published is conceived and executed in such an unassuming and tasteful spirit, that the reader has no disposition to magnify his defects. His minor poems have a very unpretending air, and remind us somewhat of the "copies of verses" that cavaliers were *accustomed to indite* for the gratification of friend or mistress. *The prettiest* and most characteristic of these occasional poems is, perhaps, that entitled "A Wish."

Mine be a cot beside the hill,
A bee-hive's hum to soothe my ear;
A willowy brook, that turns a mill,
With many a fall shall linger near.

The swallow oft beneath my thatch
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest;
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,
And share my meal, a welcome guest,

Around my ivied porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew;
And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing
In russet gown and apron blue.

The village church among the trees,
Where our first marriage vows were given,
With merry peals shall swell the breeze,
And point with taper spire to heaven.

To Rogers we must accord a true moral feeling. The cordial friend, the man of native literary sympathies and domestic tastes, are ever reflected in his pages. He has a kindly and liberal heart as well as an intellectual spirit. There are more imposing names on the scroll of poetic fame, but few who have a better claim to love and respect He is not without a poet's ambition—

Oh could my mind, unfolded in my page,
Enlighten climes and mould a future age;
Oh could it still, through each succeeding year,
My life, my manners and my name endear!

The latter aspiration has already met its fulfilment. The clearness and elegance, the quiet ardour and urbane sentiment that appear in his verse, are too candid and winning not to excite interest. Our attachment to the higher and more affecting species of poetry does not militate with, but rather enhances our sympathy with the quiet graces of his muse. The delight with which we tread *the sea-shore* and listen to the dashing billows, does not *prevent us from* reposing with pleasure beside the calm *lake, to watch* the clouds reflected in its bosom, or the *flowers that hang* their fragrant urns around its brink.

# BURNS.

THERE are certain sentiments which "give the world assurance of a man." They are inborn, not acquired. Before them fade away the trophies of scholarship and the badges of authority. They are the most endearing of human attractions. No process of culture, no mere grace of manner, no intellectual endowments, can atone for their absence, or successfully imitate their charms. These sentiments redeem our nature; their indulgence constitutes the better moments of life. Without them we grow mechanical in action, formal in manner, pedantic in mind. With them in freshness and vigour, we are true, spontaneous, morally alive. We reciprocate affection, we luxuriate in the embrace of nature, we breathe an atmosphere of love, and glow in the light of beauty. Frankness, manly independence, deep sensibility and pure enthusiasm are the characteristics of the true man. Against these fashion, trade and the whole train of petty interests wage an unceasing war. In few hearts do they survive; but wherever recognized, they carry every unperverted soul back to childhood and up to God. They vindicate human nature with irresistible eloquence, and like the air of mountains and the verdure of valleys, allure us from the thoroughfare of routine and the thorny path of destiny. When combined with genius, they utter an *appeal to the world*, and their possessor becomes a priest *of humanity*, whose oracles send forth an echo even from

the chambers of death. Such is Robert Burns. How refreshing to turn from the would-be-prophets of the day, and contemplate the inspired ploughman! No mystic emblems deform his message. We have no hieroglyphics to decipher. We need no philosophic critic at our elbow. It is a brother who speaks to us;—no singular specimen of spiritual pride, but a creature of flesh and blood. We can hear the beatings of his brave heart, not always like a "muffled drum," but often with the joy of solemn victory. We feel the grasp of his toil-hardened hand. We see the pride on his brow, the tear in his eye, the smile on his lip. We behold not an effigy of buried learning, a tame image from the mould of fashion, but a free, cordial, earnest man;—one with whom we can roam the hills, partake the cup, praise the maiden, or worship the stars. He is a human creature, only overflowing with the characteristics of humanity. To him belong in large measure the passions and the powers of his race. He professes no exemption from the common lot. He pretends not to live on rarer elements. He expects not to be ethereal before death. He conceals not his share of frailty, nor turns aside from penance. He takes 'with equal thanks a sermon or a song.' No one prays more devoutly; but the same ardour fires his earthly loves. The voice that "wales a portion with judicious care," anon is attuned to the convivial song.—The same eye that glances with poetic awe upon the hills at twilight, gazes with a less subdued fervour on the winsome features of the highland lassie. And thus vibrated the poet's heart from earth to heaven,—from the human to the godlike. Rarely and richly were mingled in him the elements of human nature. His crowning distinction is a larger soul; and this he carried into all things,—to the altar of God and the festive board, to the ploughshare's furrow and the letter of friendship, to the

martial lyric and the lover's assignation. That such a soul should arise in the midst of poverty is a blessing. So do men learn that all their appliances are as nothing before the creative energy of Nature. They may make a Parr; she alone can give birth to a Burns. It is to be rejoiced at that so noble a brother was born in a "clay-built cottage." Had his eyes first opened in a palace, so great a joy would not have descended upon the lowly and the toil-worn. These can now more warmly boast of a common lineage. Perchance, too, that fine spirit would have been meddled with till quite undone, had it first appeared in the dwelling of a wealthy citizen. Books and teachers, perhaps, would have subdued its elastic freedom,—artificial society perverted its heaven-born fire. Better that its discipline was found in "labour and sorrow" rather than in social restraint and conformity. Better that it erred through excess of passion, than de liberate hypocrisy. So rich a stream is less marred by overflowing its bounds than by growing shallow. It was nobler to yield to temptation from wayward appetite than through "malignity or design." More worthy is it that melancholy should take the form of a sad sympathy with nature, than a bitter hatred of man; that the flowers of the heart should be blighted by the heat of its lava-soil, than wither in the deadening air of artificial life. Burns lost not the susceptibility of his conscience or the sincerity and manliness of his character. In a higher sphere of life, these characteristics would have been infinitely more exposed.

The muse of Burns is distinguished by a pensive tenderness. His mind was originally of a reflective cast. His education, destiny and the scenery amid which he lived deepened this trait, and made it prevailing.—True sensibility is the fertile source of sadness. A heart *constantly alive to* the vicissitudes of life and the pathetic *appeals of nature*, cannot long maintain a lighthearted *mood. From his* profound feeling sprang the beauties of

the Scottish bard. He who could so pity a wounded hare and elegize a crushed daisy, whose young bosom favourites were Sterne and Mackenzie, lost not a single sob of the storm, nor failed to mark the gray cloud and the sighing trees. In this intense sympathy with the mournful, exists the germ of true poetical elevation. The very going out into the vastly sad, is sublime. Personal cares are forgotten; and as Byron calls upon us to forget our "petty misery" in view of the mighty ruins of Rome, so the dirges of Nature invite us into a grand funereal hall, where mortal sighs are lost in mightier wailing. This element of pensiveness distinguishes alike the poetry and character of Burns. He tells us of the exalted sensations he experienced on an autumn morning, when listening to the cry of a troop of gray plover or the solitary whistle of the curlew. The elements raged around him as he composed Bannockburn, and he loved to write at night, or during a cloudy day, being most successful in "a gloamin' shot at the muses."

There was a thorough and pervading honesty about Burns,—that freedom from disguise and simple truth of character, to the preservation of which rustic life is eminently favourable. He was open and frank in social intercourse, and his poems are but the sincere records and outpourings of his native feelings.

> Just now I've ta'en the fit o' rhyme,
> My barmie noddle's working prime
> My fancy yerkit up sublime
> Wi' hasty summon:
> Hae ye a leisure-moment's time
> To hear what's comin?

Hence he almost invariably wrote from strong emotion. "*My passions,*" he says, "raged like so many devils *until they found* vent in rhyme." This entire truthfulness *is one of the* greatest charms of his verse. For the most

part, song, satire and lyric come warm from his heart. Insincerity and pretension completely disgusted him. Scarcely does he betray the slightest impatience of his fellows, except in exposing and ridiculing these traits. Holy Willie's prayer and a few similar effusions were penned as protests against bigotry and presumption. Burns was too devotional to bear calmly the abuses of religion.

God knows, I'm not the thing I should be,
Nor am I even the thing I could be,
But twenty times, I rather would be,
An' atheist clean,
Than under Gospel colours hid be,
Just for a screen.

But satire was not his element. Rather did he love to give expression to benevolent feeling and generous affection. The native liberality of his nature cast a mantle of charity over the errors of his kind, in language which, for touching simplicity, has never been equalled.

Then gently scan your brother man
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang;
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *why* they do it:
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Wha made the heart, 'tis he alone
Decidedly can try us,
He knows each chord—its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what's *resisted*.

Burns had a truly noble soul. He cherished an honest *pride*. Obligation oppressed him, and with all his *rusticity he* firmly maintained his dignity in the polished

circles of Edinburgh. Like all manly hearts, while he keenly felt the sting of poverty, his whole nature recoiled from dependence. He desired money, not for the distinction and pleasure it brings, but chiefly that he might be free from the world. He recorded the creed of the true man;—

To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justified by honour;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Not for a train-attendant;
*But for the glorious privilege*
*Of being independent.*

His susceptibility to Nature was quick and impassioned. He hung with rapture over the hare bell, fox-glove, budding birch and hoary hawthorn. Though chiefly alive to its sterner aspects, every phase of the universe was inexpressibly dear to him.

O Nature! a' thy shows an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the simmer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light,
Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

How delightful to see the victim of poverty and care thus yield up his spirit in blest oblivion of his lot! He walked beside the river, climbed the hill and wandered over the moor, with a more exultant step and more bounding heart than ever conqueror knew. In his hours of sweet reverie, all consciousness was lost of outward poverty, in the richness of a gifted spirit. Then he looked upon creation as his-heritage. He felt drawn to her by the glowing bond of a kindred spirit. Every wild-flower from which he brushed the dew, every mountain-top to which his eyes were lifted, every star that smiled upon his path,

was a token and a pledge of immortality. He partook of their freedom and their beauty; and held fond communion with their silent loveliness. The banks of the Doon became like the bowers of Paradise, and Mossgiel was as a glorious kingdom.

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, tho' hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

That complete self-abandonment, characteristic of poets, belonged strikingly to Burns. He threw himself, all sensitive and ardent as he was, into the arms of Nature. He surrendered his heart unreservedly to the glow of social pleasure, and sought with equal heartiness the peace of domestic retirement.

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we're living sound and hale,
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave *care* o'er side!
And large, before enjoyment's gale,
Let's tak the tide.

This life has joys for you and I,
And joys that riches ne'er could buy,
And joys the very best.
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
The lover and the frien;
Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!

He sinned, and repented, with the same singleness of purpose, and completeness of devotion. This is illustrated in many of his poems. In his love and grief, in his joy and despair, we find no medium;—

By passion driven;
*And yet* the light that led astray
Was light from heaven.

Perhaps the freest and deepest element of the poetry of Burns, is love. With the first awakening of this passion in his youthful breast, came also the spirit of poetry. "My heart," says one of his letters, "was complete tinder, and eternally lighted up by some goddess or other." He was one of those susceptible men to whom love is no fiction or fancy; to whom it is not only a "strong necessity," but an overpowering influence. To female attractions he was a complete slave. An eye, a tone, a grasp of the hand, exercised over him the sway of destiny. His earliest and most blissful adventures were following in the harvest with a bonnie lassie, or picking nettles out of a fair one's hand. He had no armour of philosophy wherewith to resist the spell of beauty. Genius betrayed rather than absolved him; and his soul found its chief delight and richest inspiration in the luxury of loving.

O happy love! where love like this is found;
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've paced much this weary *mortal round*,
And sage *experience* bids me this declare—
"If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In others' arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn, that scents the evening gale."

And yet the love of Burns was poetical chiefly in its expression. He loved like a man. His was no mere sentimental passion, but a hearty attachment. He sighed not over the pride of a Laura, nor was satisfied with a smile of distant encouragement. Genuine passion was only vivified and enlarged in his heart by a poetical mind. He arrayed his rustic charmer with few ideal *attractions*. His vows were paid to

*A* creature not too bright or good
*For* human nature's daily food;
*For* transient sorrows, simple wiles,
*Praise*, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles.

Her positive and tangible graces were enough for him. He sought not to exalt them, but only to exhibit the fervour of his attachment. Even in his love was there this singular honesty. Exaggerated flattery does not mark his amatory poems, but a warm expression of his passionate regard, a sweet song over the joys of affection. Perhaps no poet has better depicted true love, in its most common manifestation. Of the various objects of his regard, the only one who seems to have inspired any purely poetical sentiment was Highland Mary. Their solemn parting on the banks of the Ayr, and her early death, are familiar to every reader of Burns. Her memory seemed consecrated to his imagination, and he has made it immortal by his beautiful lines to Mary in Heaven. Nor was the Scottish bard unaware how deep an inspiration he derived from the gentler sex. He tells us that when he desired to feel the pure spirit of poetry and obey successfully its impulse, he put himself on a regimen of admiring a fine woman.

> Health to the sex, ilk guid chiel says,
> Wi' merry dance in winter days,
> An' we to share in common;
> The gust o' joy, the balm of woe,
> The soul o' life, the heaven below,
> Is rapture-giving woman.

And of all the agencies of life there is none superior to this. Written eloquence, the voice of the bard, the music of creation, will often fail to awaken the heart. We cannot always yield ourselves to the hidden spell. But in the soft light of *her* eye genius basks, till it is warmed into a new and sweeter life. The poet is indeed kindled by communion with the most lovely creation of God. He is subdued by the sweetest of human influences. *His wings are plumed beside the fountain of love, and he soars thence to heaven.*

The poetical temperament is now better and more generally understood than formerly. Physiologists and moral philosophers have laboured, not without success, to diffuse correct ideas of its laws and liabilities. Education now averts, in frequent instances, the fatal errors to which beings thus organized are peculiarly exposed. No one has more truly described some features of the poet's fate than the author of Tam O'Shanter and the Cotter's Saturday Night:—

> Creature, though oft the prey of care and sorrow,
> When blest to-day, unmindful of to-morrow;
> A being formed t' amuse his graver friends,
> Admired and praised—and there the homage ends;
> A mortal quite unfit for fortune's strife,
> Yet oft the sport of all the ills of life;
> Prone to enjoy each pleasure riches give,
> Yet haply wanting wherewithal to live;
> Longing to wipe each tear, to heal each groan,
> Yet frequent all unheeded in his own.

The love of excitement, the physical and moral sensibility, the extremes of mood, which belong to this class of men, require a certain discipline on the one hand and indulgence on the other, which is now more readily accorded. Especially do we look with a more just eye upon the frailties of poets. It is not necessary to defend them. They are only the more lamentable from being connected with high powers. But it is a satisfaction to trace their origin to unfavourable circumstances of life and peculiarities of organization. Burns laboured under the disadvantage of a narrow and oppressive destiny, opposed to a sensitive and exalted soul. From the depths of obscure poverty he awoke to fame. Strong and adroit as he was at the several vocations of husbandry, he possessed no tact as a manager or financier. With the keenest relish for enjoyment, his means were small, and the claims of his family unceasing. Susceptible to the

most refined influences of nature, quick of apprehension, and endowed with a rich fancy, his animal nature was not less strongly developed. His flaming heart lighted not only the muse's torch, but the tempest of passion. He often sought to drown care in excess. He did not faithfully struggle with the allurements which in reality he despised. How deeply he felt the transitory nature of human enjoyment, he has told us in a series of beautiful similes:—

> But pleasures are like poppies spread,
> You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
> Or like the snow falls in the river,
> A moment white—then melts for ever;
> Or like the borealis race,
> That flit ere you can point their place;
> Or like the rainbow's lovely form
> Evanishing amid the storm.

Tossed on the waves of an incongruous experience, elevated by his gifts, depressed by his condition, the heir of fame, but the child of sorrow—gloomy in view of his actual prospects, elated by his poetic visions,—the life of Burns was no ordinary scene of trial and temptation. While we pity, let us reverence him. Let us glory in such fervent songs as he dedicated to love, friendship, patriotism and nature. True bursts of feeling came from the honest bosom of the ploughman. Sad as was his career at Dumfries, anomalous as it seems to picture him as an exciseman, how delightful his image as a noble peasant and ardent bard! What a contradiction between his human existence and his inspired soul! Literature enshrines few more endeared memorials than the poems of Burns. His lyre is wreathed with wild-flowers. Its tones are simple and glowing. Their music is like the *cordial breeze* of his native hills. It still cheers the banquet, and gives expression to the lover's thought. Its

pensive melody has a twilight sweetness; its tender ardour is melting as the sunbeams. Around the cottage and the moor, the scene of humble affection, the rite of lowly piety, it has thrown a hallowed influence, which embalms the memory of Burns, and breathes perpetual masses for his soul.

# CAMPBELL.

THERE are two prominent sources of poetry—fantasy and feeling. In a few men of genius they are so equally mingled as scarcely to be distinguished, and their happy combination is doubtless the perfection of the art. It is easy, however, to perceive of late a growing disposition to undervalue vigorous and earnest verse and exalt at its expense the more dreamy and careless effusions of fancy. A certain order of critics go so far as to confine the name of poetry only to the latter. The only bard they recognize is he who throws into rhythmical form the most unconnected and fantastic images he can command—whose sentiment springs from vague musing rather than real emotion, and whose metaphors are ingeniously fanciful. A speculative reverie, a visionary experience like that of the Opium Eater,—an elaborate mysticism seems to originate this species of verse. It appears the result of an excess of one poetical element. Imagination is, indeed, an essential of poetry, but with it must blend thought enough to give energy, and feeling sufficient to awaken a human glow, or the result is as coldly brilliant as frost by moonlight.

The mood in which such poetry is conceived is often one of the most fascinating we experience. It is that state which Irving significantly calls day-dreaming. In *the pleasing languor* of a summer noon, amid the vast *monotony of the ocean*, or when seated by a lonely fire-

side at midnight, we often instinctively yield to a train of thought which soothes by its very waywardness. The mind escapes from its work-day round and expatiates at its own free will. In such lawless excursions many a striking picture is suggested and rare spirit evoked, but it is not to be supposed that they can be indiscriminately transferred to the poet's page with good effect. And yet there are writers who place such a value upon these crude and unorganized products of their fancy as to throw them forth without exercising either taste or reflection. If poetry is an art, not thus is it to be written. German literature and the example of Shelley, Wordsworth and other metaphysical writers, have induced among less gifted spirits, too complete a reliance upon fantasy as the source of poetry. A certain degree of fact and feeling, of clearness of purpose and strength of thought, of direct language and sincere ardour is essential, if not to poetry in general, at least to that poetry which will move the Saxon heart. It is this conviction which enables us to revert with pleasure to that class of poets whose attraction lies in their manliness and enthusiasm—who feel strongly and express themselves with a cheering vivacity. Not always would we be lulled by the minstrel, or led through the mystic windings of a flowery labyrinth. There are times when we love the trumpet's note better than the Æolian harp; when the mountain air is sweeter than the odours of the East—the bard of hope is more welcome than Coleridge or Tennyson.

The spirit of Campbell's muse is chivalric and generous. We readily understand the quick sensibility he is said to have manifested at any instance of injustice, after communing with his poetry. He seems to have inherited *not a little of* the brave sympathies of the old clan whose *name he bears.* With the cause of Freedom his name is *nobly identified.* His "Song of the Greeks," and the

finest episode of his long poem which so glowingly depicts the fate of Poland, afford thrilling proofs of his attachment to liberty. With the cause of the latter nation his private exertions as well as public appeals have completely and most honourably identified his name. His ardent love of music might have been inferred from his versification, which is often singularly melodious and almost invariably affecting. Campbell must certainly be placed in the rank of fortunate bards. Although no elaborate and frequent triumphs succeeded his early success, an uncommon proportion of what he has published has been deservedly popular. If his minor and casual literary efforts, during the last forty years, have not added to his laurels they have proved occasions of agreeable occupation and pecuniary advantage. His domestic relations were remarkably happy though early interrupted by death. His social privileges and his opportunities for literary improvement have been great. He has enjoyed the friendship of the gifted in the various walks of intellectual life in England, and his existence has been pleasantly divided between mental application and the enjoyment of Nature and congenial fellowship. It was the rare good fortune of Campbell to break at once upon the world as a poet in the hey-day of youth. His "Pleasures of Hope" have certainly not proved illusive. They immediately won for him the admiration of all classes of readers, and the handsome annuity of two hundred pounds so justly awarded to him on their publication, was continued until his death. Few modern poets have reaped a more bountiful harvest of fame and comfort from their labours, and few have proved themselves more worthy of the distinction.

The direct style and decided tone of the minstrel whose heart is the fountain of his verse, wins him a larger if *not so select* an audience than belongs to the more refined

and imaginative. He speaks a language of universal import. He gives expression to sentiments not peculiar but general. The obligation under which he places his fellow beings is that of having given "a local habitation and a name" to feelings deeply enshrined in their breasts, but hitherto wanting an adequate voice—

"What oft was felt, but ne'er so well expressed."

The poetry of abstract imagination, the undefined, wild and mystical shapings of thought, have their interest and value, but to appreciate them it is not requisite for us to be insensible to the more clear and artless effusions of the muse. These fix the attention at once, impress the memory and kindle the heart. In such strains would we ever see recorded the lessons of patriotism and the simple overflowing of affection. They occupy the same relation to more fanciful poetry that popular oratory does to philosophical reasoning, the letter of friendship to the studied essay, the household song to the intricate composition. Campbell is a delightful representative of this class of poets. If we should choose a single term to indicate his attractiveness, we would call him spirited. The greater part of his verse is glowing and alive. It bears not the air of vague reverie and listless musing, but of a mind full of its subject. He does not dally with the muse but seeks her favour in a manly and ardent manner. He is not dainty and elaborate, but impassioned and vivid. He seems to be thoroughly in earnest—a quality not less essential than rare. He is moved by a decided sentiment and hence conveys a strong impression. In a word he is one of those poets whose sympathies must be excited before they can write. The mere habit of versification, the passing wish of a moment, or some conventional motive are quite insufficient to elicit the gems of such a bard. Accordingly they are either eminently successful or signally indifferent. Much absurd prejudice with regard to

what is called the poetry of passion has been induced by the numberless critics of Byron. Because his life was irregular and his mind sometimes fevered rather than warmed into action, it has been argued that true poetry is wholly contemplative. As if we were never to be roused as well as soothed, as if stagnation were not equally false to our nature as violence, and as if there were not seasons and subjects which claimed and justified a wholesome and deep enthusiasm. One of Campbell's terse and awakening lines admirably defines the nature of his own poetry: "For song is but the eloquence of truth." He does not dilate with artist-like taste upon the minute graces of nature, he seldom displays a dramatic or picturesque talent, but he gives forcible, bold and moving utterance to sentiments of bravery, moral indignation and devoted love. In the genial animation of friendly converse we are often surprised at a felicity of diction or an effective metaphor. The same unpremeditated touches of beauty or vigour distinguish the writings which proceed from strong feeling. The unusual number of Campbell's lines which have become proverbial illustrates this truth. We scarcely remember, when we use such familiar expressions as "angels' visits, few and far between"—"'t is distance lends enchantment to the view"—"coming events cast their shadows before," that they originated with Campbell. It would indeed be difficult to name a modern English poet whose works are more closely entwined with our early associations or whose happier efforts linger more pleasantly in the memory.

Campbell is one of the kings of school literature in this country. More dazzling species of fame may reward other minstrels; to be the cherished by the virtuous and meditative like Wordsworth, to be the favourite of social circles like Moore, or the idol of a chosen few like Shelley, is no undesirable destiny for a poet. But to a kindly

heart what can be sweeter than the homage of youth? To a sympathising mind how consoling is the thought of having guided the generous impulses of boyhood toward freedom and truth by the charm of song! The fine speculations of the visionary, the cold logic of the learned have no fascination for the impatient heart of the young. When "years that bring the philosophic mind" have matured the judgment and tempered the feelings, highly thoughtful and imaginative poetry weaves its quiet spell with grateful power. But before that period, a clear and trumpet-toned appeal is needed; the muse must wear a fresh aspect and bound like Hebe in our pathway full of life and beauty, or charm with the spell of overpowering pathos. Language must come in bold and stirring notes; the idea must be simple, the sentiment true, the image affecting, or the appeal is vain. And the same is true in no small degree in later years. In the hour of retirement and intellectual luxury we turn with zest to all the masters of the art; but the bard who would arrest the attention of eager and busy manhood on his crowded path, must address him in frank and comprehensive terms, and awaken the sleeping echoes of his heart with a lofty and clear strain. When Croly, in his ode to Death, speaks of the

> "Bards, sages, heroes side by side,
> *Who darkened nations when they died;*"

or Byron in his monody on Sheridan, exclaims that

> "*Folly loves the maryrdom of fame,*"

or Sprague declares that

> "Rulers and ruled in common gloom may lie,
> *But Nature's laureate bard shall never die.*"

*we instantly* receive the poet's thought and respond to *his sentiment.* And such simple force of language as

vigour of expression, is valuable for the very reason that it is so easily comprehended and so immediately felt. Many such expressive touches occur in the poetry of Campbell. In his lines to the Rainbow, two circumstances are introduced with striking conciseness:

"When o'er the green, undeluged earth
Heaven's covenant thou didst shine,
*How came the world's gray fathers forth*
*To watch thy sacred sign!*
And when its yellow lustre smiled
O'er mountains yet untrod,
*Each mother held aloft her child*
*To bless the bow of God.*"

An instance of similar terseness and meaning may be found in the Valedictory Stanzas to Kemble:

"For ill can Poetry express
Full many a tone of thought sublime,
And Painting mute and motionless,
*Steals but a glance from time.*
But by the mighty actor brought,
Illusion's perfect triumphs come,
*Verse ceases to be airy thought*
*And Sculpture to be dumb.*"

The description of an Indian chief in "Gertrude," affords another illustration:

"As monumental bronze unchanged his look;
A soul that pity touched but never shook;
Trained from its tree-rocked cradle to his bier,
The fierce extreme of good and ill to brook,
Impassive—*fearing but the shame of fear—*
*A stoic of the woods, a man without a tear.*"

He finely compares the humming bird's wings to "atoms of the rainbow fluttering round," and calls absence "the pain without the peace of death." Madame *de Stael says* that the fragility of delight constitutes the *great secret of* its charm. How graphically has Camp-

bell portrayed in a single line the evanescent character of human pleasure:

> "And in the visions of romantic youth
> What years of endless bliss are yet to flow!
> But, mortal pleasure, what art thou in truth?
> *The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below.*"

The enthusiasm with which the "Pleasures of Hope' were written is evinced by the eloquent liveliness of the strain, and not less by the poet's frequent recurrence to the main subject, and the fresh ardour with which he resumes after a slight digression. He constantly addresses Hope anew, as auspicious, primeval, eternal, congenial, the angel of life and the friend of the brave. The praise of Love and the protest against Scepticism in this poem, are among the best examples of heroic verse in the language. "Theodric" is conceived in a more familiar vein, but contains some very beautiful developments of sentiment. The half-pastoral, half-romantic spirit of "Gertrude of Wyoming" has long made it a distinguished favourite. But the martial lyrics of Campbell have been his great sources of renown. In early life he visited Germany, then the theatre of war, and carried from that country very vivid impressions. He saw from his carriage window, a troop of hussars on their way from the field, wiping the blood from their sabres on the manes of their horses. The effect of these scenes upon his imagination is easily recognised in the awakening lines of "Lochiel," and the rhythmical magic of "Hohenlinden," "The Battle of the Baltic," and "Mariners of England." And we have a more tender revelation of the associations of war in the "Soldier's Dream." Were we to select the most impressive specimen of Campbell's command of *thought* and metre, of his skill in making "sound an *echo* to the sense," it would be certain stanzas of the *noble ode* entitled "Hallowed Ground." An elocution-

ist of genius and sensibility, can give to this poem a most solemn effect, resembling the mingled elevation and delight which steals over us in a Gothic church. How lofty the sentiment and musical the flow of the following verses:

"What hallows ground where heroes sleep?
'Tis not the sculptured piles you heap!
In dews that heavens far distant weep
Their turf may bloom;
Or Genii twine beneath the deep
Their coral tomb.

"But strew his ashes to the wind,
Whose sword and voice has served mankind—
And is he dead whose glorious mind
Lifts thine on high?"
To live in hearts we leave behind
Is not to die.

"Is 't death to fall for Freedom's right?
He's dead alone who lacks her light!
And murder sullies in Heaven's sight
The sword he draws:—
What can alone ennoble fight?
A noble cause!

"Give that! and welcome War to brace
Her drums, and rend Heaven's reeking face.
The colours planted face to face,
The charging cheer,
Though death's pale horse led on the chase,
Shall still be dear.

"What's hallowed ground? 'Tis what gives birth
To sacred thoughts in souls of worth!
Peace! Independence! Truth! go forth
Earth's compass round;
And your high priesthood shall make earth
*All hallowed ground.*"

# WORDSWORTH.

In an intellectual history of our age, the bard of Rydal Mount must occupy a prominent place. His name is so intimately associated with the poetical criticisms of the period, that, even if his productions are hereafter neglected, he cannot wholly escape consideration. The mere facts of his life will preserve his memory. It will not be forgotten that one among the men of acknowledged genius in England, during a period of great political excitement, and when society accorded to literary success the highest honours, should voluntarily remain secluded amid the mountains, the uncompromising advocate of a theory, from time to time sending forth his effusions, as uncoloured by the poetic taste of the time, as statues from an isolated quarry. It has been the fortune of Wordsworth, like many original characters, to be almost wholly regarded from the two extremes of prejudice and admiration. The eclectic spirit, which is so appropriate to the criticism of Art, has seldom swayed his commentators. It has scarcely been admitted, that his works may please to a certain extent, and in particular traits, and in other respects prove wholly uncongenial. Whoever recognizes his beauties is held responsible for his system; and those who have stated his defects, have been unfairly ranked with the insensible and unreasonable reviewers who so fiercely assailed him at the outset of his career. There is a medium ground, from which we can survey the sub-

ject to more advantage. From this point of observation, it is easy to perceive that there is reason on both sides of the question. It was natural and just that the lovers of poetry, reared in the school of Shakspere, should be repelled at the outset by a new minstrel, whose prelude was an argument. It was like being detained at the door of a cathedral by a dull *cicerone*, who, before granting admittance, must needs deliver a long homily on the grandeur of the interior, and explain away its deficiencies. "Let us enter," we impatiently exclaim: "if the building is truly grand, its sublimity needs no expositor; if it is otherwise, no reasoning will render it impressive." The idea of adopting for poetical objects "the real language of men, when in a vivid state of sensation," was indeed, as Coleridge observes, never strictly attempted; but there was something so deliberate, and even cold, in Wordsworth's first appeal, that we cannot wonder it was unattractive. Byron and Burns needed no introduction. The earnestness of their manner secured instant attention. Their principles and purposes were matters of afterthought. Whoever is even superficially acquainted with human nature, must have prophecied a doubtful reception to a bard, who begins by calmly stating his reasons for considering prose and verse identical, his wish to inculcate certain truths which he deemed neglected, and the several considerations which induced him to adopt rhyme for the purpose. Nor is this feeling wholly unworthy of respect, even admitting, with Wordsworth, that mere popularity is no evidence of the genuineness of poetry. Minds of poetical sensibility are accustomed to regard the true poet as so far inspired by his experience, as to write from a spontaneous enthusiasm. They regard verse as his natural element—the most congenial form of expression. They imagine he can scarcely account wholly to himself, far less to others, for his diction and imagery—

any farther than they are the result of emotion too intense and absorbing to admit of any conscious or reflective process. Even if "poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity," it must be of that earnest and tender kind, which is only occasionally experienced. Trust, therefore, was not readily accorded a writer who scarcely seemed enamoured of his Art, and presented a theory in prose to win the judgment, instead of first taking captive the heart by the music of his lyre. Nor is this the only just cause of Wordsworth's early want of appreciation. He has not only written too much from pure reflection, but the quantity of his verse is wholly out of proportion to its quality. He has too often written for the mere sake of writing. The mine he opened may be inexhaustible, but to him it is not given to bring to light all its treasures. His characteristics are not universal. His power is not unlimited. On the contrary, his points of peculiar excellence, though rare, are comparatively few. He has endeavoured to extend his range beyond its natural bounds. In a word, he has written too much, and too indiscriminately. It is to be feared that habit has made the work of versifying necessary, and he has too often resorted to it merely as an occupation. Poetry is too sacred to be thus mechanically pursued. The true bard seizes only genial periods, and inciting themes. He consecrates only his better moments to "the divinest of arts." He feels that there is a correspondence between certain subjects and his individual genius, and to these he conscientiously devotes his powers. Wordsworth seems to have acted on a different principle. It is obvious to a discerning reader that his muse is frequently whipped into service. He is too often *content to* indite a series of common-place thoughts, and *memorialize* topics which have apparently awakened in *his mind only* a formal interest. It sometimes seems as

if he had taken up the business of a bard, and felt bound to fulfil its functions. His political opinions, his historical reading, almost every event of personal experience, must be chronicled, in the form of a sonnet or blank verse. The language may be chaste, the sentiment unexceptionable, the moral excellent, and yet there may be no poetry, aud perhaps the idea has been often better expressed in prose. Even the admirers of Wordsworth are compelled, therefore, to acknowledge, that with all his unrivalled excellencies, he has written too many

> "Such lays as neither ebb nor flow,
> Correctly cold, and regularly slow."

Occasional felicities of style do not atone for such frequent desecration of the muse. We could forgive them in a less-gifted minstrel; but with one of Wordsworth's genius it is more difficult to compromise. The number of his indifferent attempts shade the splendour of his real merit. The poems protected by his fame, which are uninspired by his genius, have done much to blind a large class of readers to his intrinsic worth. Another circumstance has contributed to the same result. His redeeming graces often, from excess, become blemishes. In avoiding the tinsel of a meretricious style, he sometimes degenerates into positive homeliness. In rejecting profuse ornament, he often presents his conceptions in so bald a manner as to prove utterly unattractive. His simplicity is not unfrequently childish, his calmness stagnation, his pathos puerility. And these impressions, in some instances, have been allowed to outweigh those which his more genuine qualities inspire. For when we reverse the picture, Wordsworth presents claims to grateful admiration, second to no poet of the age; and no susceptible and observing mind can study his writings without yielding him at least this cordial acknowledgment.

It is not easy to estimate the happy influence Wordsworth

has exerted upon poetical taste and practice, by the example he has given of a more simple and artless style. Like the sculptors who lead their pupils to the anatomy of the human frame, and the painters who introduced the practice of drawing from the human figure, Wordsworth opposed to the artificial and declamatory, the clear and natural in diction. He exhibited, as it were, a new source of the elements of expression. He endeavoured, and with singular success, to revive a taste for less exciting poetry. He boldly tried the experiment of introducing plain viands, at a banquet garnished with all the art of gastronomy. He offered to substitute crystal water for ruddy wine, and invited those accustomed only to "a sound of revelry by night," to go forth and breathe the air of mountains, and gaze into the mirror of peaceful lakes. He aimed to persuade men that they could be "moved by gentler excitements" than those of luxury and violence. He essayed to calm their beating hearts, to cool their fevered blood, to lead them gently back to the fountains that "go softly." He bade them repose their throbbing brows upon the lap of Nature. He quietly advocated the peace of rural solitude, the pleasure of evening walks among the hills, as more salutary than more ostentatious amusements. The lesson was suited to the period. It came forth from the retirement of Nature as quietly as a zephyr; but it was not lost in the hum of the world. Insensibly it mingled with the noisy strife, and subdued it to a sweeter murmur. It fell upon the heart of youth, and its passions grew calmer. It imparted a more harmonious tone to the meditations of the poet. It tempered the aspect of life to many an eager spirit, and gradually weaned the thoughtful from the encroachments of false taste and conventional habits. To a commercial people it portrayed the attractiveness of *tranquillity*. Before an unhealthy and flashy literature,

it set up a standard of truthfulness and simplicity. In an age of mechanical triumph, it celebrated the majestic resources of the universe.

To this calm voice from the mountains, none could listen without advantage. What though its tones were sometimes monotonous —they were hopeful and serene. To listen exclusively, might indeed prove wearisome; but in some placid moments those mild echoes could not but bring good cheer. In the turmoil of cities, they refreshed from contrast; among the green fields, they inclined the mind to recognize blessings to which it is often insensible. There were ministers to the passions, and apostles of learning, sufficient for the exigencies of the times. Such an age could well suffer one preacher of the simple, the natural and the true; one advocate of a wisdom not born of books, of a pleasure not obtainable from society, of a satisfaction underived from outward activity. And such a prophet proved William Wordsworth.

Sensibility to Nature is characteristic of poets in general. Wordsworth's feelings in this regard have the character of affection. He does not break out into ardent apostrophes like that of Byron addressed to the Ocean, or Coleridge's Hymn at Chamouni; but his verse breathes a constant and serene devotion to all the charms of natural scenery—from the mountain-range that bounds the horizon, to the daisy beside his path:

"If stately passions in me burn,
And one chance look to thee I turn,
I drink out of an humbler urn,
A lowlier pleasure;
The homelier sympathy that heeds
The common life our nature breeds,
A wisdom fitted to the needs
Of hearts at leasure."

He does not seem so much to resort to the quiet scenes of the country for occasional recreation, as to live and breathe only in their tranquil atmosphere. His interest in the universe has been justly called personal. It is not the passion of a lover in the dawn of his bliss, nor the unexpected delight of a metropolitan, to whose sense rural beauty is arrayed in the charms of novelty; but rather the settled, familiar, and deep attachment of a friend:

> "Though absent long,
> These forms of beauty have not been to me
> As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
> But oft in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
> Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
> And passing even into my purer mind
> With tranquil restoration."

The life, both inward and outward, of Wordsworth, is most intimately associated with lakes and mountains. Amid them he was born, and to them has he ever looked for the necessary aliment of his being. Nor are his feelings on the subject merely passive or negative. He has a reason for the faith that is in him. To the influences of Nature he brings a philosophic imagination. No transient pleasure, no casual agency, does he ascribe to the outward world. In his view, its functions in relation to man are far more penetrating and efficient than has ever been acknowledged. Human education he deems a process for which the Creator has made adequate provision in this "goodly frame" of earth and sea and sky.

> "He had small need of books; for many a Tale
> Traditionary, round the mountains hung;
> And many a legend peopling the dark woods,
> Nourished Imagination in her growth,

And gave the Mind that apprehensive power,
By which it is made quick to recognize
The moral scope and aptitude of things."

* * * * *

"One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

Accordingly, both in details and combination, Nature has been the object of his long and earnest study. To illustrate her unobserved and silent ministry to the heart, has been his favourite pursuit. From his poems might be gleaned a compendium of mountain influences. Even the animal world is viewed in the same light. In the much-ridiculed Peter Bell, Susan, and the White-Doe of Rylstone, we have striking instances. To present the affecting points of its relation to mankind has been one of the most daring experiments of his muse :

"One lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows and what conceals,
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride,
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

It is the common and universal in Nature that he loves to celebrate. The rare and startling seldom find a place in his verse. That calm, soothing, habitual language, addressed to the mind by the common air and sky, the ordinary verdure, the field-flower, and the sunset, is the almost invariable theme of his song. And herein have his labours proved chiefly valuable. They have tended to make us more reverent listeners to the daily voices of earth, to make us realize the goodness of our com- heritage, and partake, with a more conscious a sensibility, of the beautiful around us.

In the same spirit has Wordsworth looked u *life and history*. To lay bare the native eleme *acter in its simplest* form, to assert the essen

of life in its most rude and common manifestations, to vindicate the interest which belongs to human beings, simply as such, have been the darling objects of his thoughts. Instead of Corsairs and Laras, peerless ladies and perfect knights, a waggoner, a beggar, a potter, a pedlar, are the characters of whose feelings and experience he sings. The operations of industry, bereavement, temptation, remorse and local influences, upon these children of humble toil, have furnished problems which he delighted to solve. And who shall say that in so doing, he has not been of signal service to his kind? Who shall say that through such portraits a wider and truer sympathy, a more vivid sense of human brotherhood, a more just self-respect, has not been extensively awakened? Have not our eyes been thus opened to the better aspects of ignorance and poverty? Have we not thus been made to feel the true claims of man? Allured by the gentle monitions from Rydal Mount, do we not now look upon our race in a more meek and susceptible mood, and pass the lowliest being beside the highway, with more of that new sentiment of respect and hope which was heralded by the star of Bethlehem? Can we not more sincerely exclaim with the hero of *Sartor Resartus:* "Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, beaten with many stripes, even as I am? Ever, whether thou wear the royal mantle or the beggar's gaberdine, art thou not so weary, so heavy laden? O! my brother, my brother! why cannot I shelter thee in my bosom, and wipe away all tears from thine eyes?"

In accordance with this humane philosophy, Childhood is contemplated by Wordsworth. The spirit of the Saviour's sympathy with this beautiful era of life, seems to possess his muse. Its unconsciousness, its ignorance of death, its trust, hope and peace, its teachings, and promise he has portrayed with rare sympathy. Witness,

"We are Seven," the "Pet Lamb," and especially the Ode, which is perhaps the finest and most characteristic of Wordworth's compositions. A reader of his poetry, who imbibes its spirit, can scarcely look upon the young with indifference. The parent must thence derive a new sense of the sacredness of children, and learn to reverence their innocence, to leave unmarred their tender traits, and to yield them more confidently to the influences of Nature. In his true and feeling chronicles of the "heaven" that "lies about us in our infancy," Wordsworth has uttered a silent but most eloquent reproach against all the absurdities and sacrilegious abuses of modern education. He has made known the truth, that children have their lessons to convey as well as receive:

> "O dearest, dearest boy, my heart
> For better lore would seldom yearn,
> Could I but teach the hundreth part
> Of what from thee I learn."

He has made more evident the awful chasm between the repose and hopefulness of happy childhood, and the cynical distrust of worldly age. He thus indirectly but forcibly appeals to men for a more guarded preservation of the early dew of existence, so recklessly lavished upon the desert of ambition:

> "—— Those first affections,
> Those shadowy recollections,
> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain-light of all our day;
> Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
> Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
> Our noisy years seem moments in the being
> Of the eternal silence."

He has exemplified that the worst evil of life is rather acquired than inherited, and vindicated the beneficent designs of the Creator, by exhibiting humanity when *fresh from his* hand. This is a high moral service. Up-

on many of those who have become familiar with Wordsworth in youth, such impressions must have been permanent and invaluable, greatly influencing their observation of life and nature, and touching "to finer issues" their unpledged sympathies. It is with the eye of a meditative poet that Wordsworth surveys life and nature. And thus inspired, a new elevation is imparted to "ordinary moral sensations," and it is the sentiment rather than the subject which gives interest to the song. Hence it is absolutely necessary that the reader should sympathize with the feelings of the poet, to enjoy or understand him. He appeals to that contemplative spirit which does not belong to all, and visits even its votaries but occasionally; to "a sadness that has its seat in the depths of reason;" he professes to "follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature." To enter into purposes like these, there must exist a delicate sympathy with human nature, a reflective habit, a mingling of reason and fancy, an imagination active but not impassioned. The frame of mind which he labours to induce, and in which he must be read, is

> "That sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
> Tribute to ease: and, of its joy secure,
> The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
> Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
> And on the vacant air;"
>
> * * * * * *
>
> "—— that serene and blessed mood,
> In which the affections gently lead us on,
> Until the breath of this corporeal frame,
> And even the motion of our human blood,
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul.
> While, with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> *We see* into the life of things."

This calm and holy musing, this deep and intimate communion with Nature, this spirit of peace, should sometimes visit us. There are periods when passionate poetry wearies, and a lively measure is discordant. There are times when we are calmed and softened, and it is a luxury to pause and forget the promptings of desire and the cares of life; when it is a relief to leave the crowd and wander into solitude, when, faint and disappointed, we seek, like tired children, the neglected bosom of Nature, and in the serenity of her maternal smile, find rest and solace. Such moments redeem existence from its monotony, and refesh the human heart with dew from the urns of Peace. Then it is that the bard of Rydal Mount is like a brother, and we deeply feel that it is good for us to have known him.

# COLERIDGE.

Coleridge appears to have excelled all his cotemporaries in personal impressiveness. Men of the highest talent and cultivation have recorded, in the most enthusiastic terms, the intellectual treat his conversation afforded. The fancy is captivated by the mere description of his fluent and emphatic, yet gentle and inspired language. We are haunted with these vivid pictures of the 'old man eloquent,' as by those of the sages of antiquity, and the renowned *improvisatores* of modern times. Hazlitt and Lamb seem never weary of the theme. They make us realize, as far as description can, the affectionate temper, the simple bearing, and earnest intelligence of their friend. We feel the might and interest of a living soul, and sigh that it was not our lot to partake directly of its overflowing gifts.

Though so invaluable as a friend and companion, unfortunately for posterity, Coleridge loved to talk and read far more than to write. Hence the records of his mind bear no proportion to its endowments and activity. Ill-health early drew him from "life in motion, to life in thought and sensation." Necessity drove him to literary labour. He was too unambitious, and found too much enjoyment in the spontaneous exercise of his mind, to assume willingly the toils of authorship. His mental tastes were not of a popular cast. In boyhood he "*waxed not pale at* philosophic draughts," and there was in his

soul an aspiration after truth—an interest in the deep things of life—a 'hungering for eternity,' essentially opposed to success as a miscellaneous writer. One of the most irrational complaints against Coleridge, was his dislike of the French. Never was there a more honest prejudice. In literature, he deemed that nation responsible for having introduced the artificial school of poetry, which he detested; in politics, their inhuman atrocities, during the revolution, blighted his dearest theory of man; in life, their frivolity could not but awaken disgust in a mind so serious, and a heart so tender, where faith and love were cherished in the very depths of reflection and sensibility. It is, indeed, easy to discover in his works ample confirmation of the testimony of his friends, but they afford but an unfinished monument to his genius. We must be content with the few memorials he has left of a powerful imagination and a good heart. Of these his poems furnish the most beautiful. They are the sweetest echo of his marvellous spirit;—

> A song divine, of high and passionate thoughts,
> To their own music chaunted.

The eye of the ancient Mariner holds us, in its wild spell, as it did the wedding-guest, while we feel the truth that

> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

The charm of regretful tenderness is upon us with as sweet a mystery, as the beauty of the "lady of a far countrie," when we read these among other musical lines of Christabel:

> Alas! they had been friends
> But whispering tongues
> And constancy lives in

And life is thorny; and youth is vain
*And to be wroth with one we love,*
*Doth work like madness in the brain.*

"No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher." True as this may be in one sense, we hold it an unfortunate rule for a poetical mind to act upon. It was part of the creed of Coleridge, and his works illustrate its unfavourable influence. His prose, generally speaking, is truly satisfactory only when it is poetical. The human mind is so constituted as to desire completeness. The desultory character of Coleridge's prose writings is often wearisome and disturbing. He does not carry us on to a given point by a regular road, but is ever wandering from the end proposed. We are provoked at this waywardness the more, because, ever and anon, we catch glimpses of beautiful localities, and look down most inviting vistas. At these promising fields of thought, and vestibules of truth, we are only permitted to glance, and then are unceremoniously hurried off in the direction that happens to please our guide's vagrant humour. This desultory style essentially mars the interest of nearly all the prose of this distinguished man. Not only the compositions, but the opinions, habits, and experience of Coleridge, partake of the same erratic character. His classical studies at Christ's hospital were interwoven with the reading of a circulating library. He proposed to become a shoemaker while he was studying medicine. He excited the wonder of every casual acquaintance by his schoolboy discourse, while he provoked his masters by starting an argument instead of repeating a rule. He incurred a chronic rheumatism by swimming with his clothes on, and left the sick ward to enlist in a regiment of dragoons. He laid magnificent plans of primitive felicity to be realized on *the banks of* the Susquehanna, while he wandered pen-

niless in the streets of London. He was at different times a zealous Unitarian, and a high Churchman—a political lecturer—a metaphysical essayist—a preacher—a translator—a traveller—a foreign secretary—a philosopher—an editor—a poet. We cannot wonder that his productions, particularly those that profess to be elaborate, should, in a measure, partake of the variableness of his mood. His works, like his life, are fragmentary. He is, too, frequently prolix, labours upon topics of secondary interest, and excites only to disappoint expectation. By many sensible readers his metaphysical views are pronounced unintelligible, and by some German scholars declared arrant plagiarisms. These considerations are the more painful from our sense of the superiority of the man. He proposes to awaken thought, to address and call forth the higher faculties, and to vindicate the claims of important truth. Such designs claim respect. We honour the author who conscientiously entertains them. We seat ourselves reverently at the feet of a teacher whose aim is so exalted. We listen with curiosity and hope. Musical are many of the periods, beautiful the images, and here and there comes a single idea of striking value; but for these we are obliged to hear many discursive exordiums, irrelevant episodes and random speculations. We are constantly reminded of Charles Lamb's reply to the poet's inquiry if he had ever heard him preach—'I never knew you do any thing else,' said Elia. It is highly desirable that the prose-writings of Coleridge should be thoroughly winnowed. A volume of delightful aphorisms might thus be easily gleaned. Long as we have forgotten the general train of his observations, isolated remarks, full of meaning and truth, linger in our memories. Scattered through his works are many passages, referring to literature and human nature, which would serve as maxims in philosophy. [illegible]

Their effect is often lost from the position they occupy, in the midst of abstruse or dry discussions that repel the majority even of truth-seekers. His Biographia is the most attractive of his prose productions.

It is not difficult, in a measure at least, to explain or rather account for, these peculiarities. Coleridge himself tells us that in early youth, he indulged a taste for metaphysical speculations to excess. He was fond of quaint and neglected authors. He early imbibed a love of controversy, and took refuge in first principles,—in the elements of man's nature to sustain his positions. To this ground few of his school-fellows could follow him; and we cannot wonder that he became attached to a field of thought seldom explored, and, from its very vague and mystical character, congenial to him. That he often reflected to good purpose it would be unjust to deny; but that his own consciousness, at times, became morbid, and his speculations, in consequence, disjointed and misty, seems equally obvious. We are not disposed to take it for granted that this irregular development of mental power is the least useful. Perhaps one of Coleridge's evening conversations or single aphorisms has more deeply excited some minds to action, than the regular performances of a dozen inferior men. It is this feeling which probably led him to express, with such earnestness, the wish that the "criterion of a scholar's utility were the number and value of the truths he has circulated and minds he has awakened."

A distinguishing trait of Coleridge's genius was a rare power of comparison. His metaphors are often unique and beautiful. Here also the poet excels the philosopher. It may be questioned if any modern writer whose works are equally limited, has illustrated his ideas with more originality and interest. When encountered amid his *grave disquisitions*, the similitudes of Coleridge strikingly

proclaim the poetical cast of his mind, and lead us to regret that its energies were not more devoted to the imaginative department of literature. At times he was conscious of the same feeling. "Well were it for me perhaps," he remarks in the Biographia, "had I never relapsed into the same mental disease; if I had continued to pluck the flower and reap the harvest from the cultivated surface, instead of delving in the unwholesome quicksilver mines of metaphysic depths." That he formed as just an estimate of the superficial nature of political labour, is evident from the following allusion to partizan characters:

> Fondly these attach
> A radical causation to a few
> Poor drudges of chastising Providence,
> Who borrow all their hues and qualities
> From our own folly and rank wickedness,
> Which gave them birth and nursed them.

A few examples taken at random, will suffice to show his "dim similitudes woven in moral strains."

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"To set our nature at strife with itself for a good purpose, implies the same sort of prudence as a priest of Diana would have manifested, who should have proposed to dig up the celebrated charcoal foundations of the mighty temple of Ephesus, in order to furnish fuel for the burnt-offerings on its altars."

"The reader, who would follow a close reasoner to the summit of the absolute principle of any one important subject, has chosen a chamois-hunter for his guide. He cannot carry us on his shoulders; we must strain our sinews, as he has strained his; and make firm footing on the smooth rock for ourselves, by the blood of toil from our own feet."

"In the case of libel, the degree makes the kind, the circumstances constitute the criminality; and both degree and circumstances, like the ascending shades of colour, or the shooting hues of a dove's neck, die away into each other, incapable of definition or outline."

"Would to heaven that the verdict to be passed on my labours depended on those who least needed them! The water-lily in

the midst of waters lifts up its broad leaves and expands its petals, at the first pattering of the shower, and rejoices in the rain with a quicker sympathy than the parched shrub in the sandy desert."

"Human experience, like the stern lights of a ship at sea, illumines only the path which we have passed over."

"I have laid too many eggs in the hot sands of this wilderness the world, with ostrich carelessness and ostrich oblivion. The greater part, indeed, have been trod under foot, and are forgotten; but yet no small number have crept forth into life, some to furnish feathers for the caps of others, and still more to plume the shafts in the quivers of my enemies."

———On the driving cloud the shining bow,
That gracious thing made up of smiles and tears,
Mid the wild rack and rain that slant below
Stands—
*As though the spirits of all lovely flowers*
*Inweaving each its wreath and dewy crown,*
*And ere they sunk to earth in vernal showers,*
*Had built a bridge to tempt the angels down.*

Remorse is as the heart in which it grows:
If that be gentle, it drops balmy dews
Of true repentance; but if proud and gloomy,
It is a poison tree, that, pierced to the inmost,
Weeps only tears of poison.

The more elaborate poetical compositions of Coleridge display much talent and a rare command of language. His dramatic attempts, however, are decidedly inferior in interest and power to many of his fugitive pieces. Wallenstein, indeed, is allowed to be a master-piece of translation—and, although others have improved upon certain passages, as a whole it is acknowledged to be an unequalled specimen of its kind. But to realize the true elements of the poet's genius, we must have recourse to his minor poems. In these, his genuine sentiments found genial development. They are beautiful emblems of his personal history, and admit us to the secret chambers of his heart. We recognize, as we ponder them, the native

fire of his muse, "unmixed with baser matter." Of the juvenile poems, the Monody on Chatterton strikes us as the most remarkable. It overflows with youthful sympathy, and contains passages of singular power for the effusions of so inexperienced a bard. Take, for instance, the following lines, where an identity of fate is suggested from the consciousness of error and disappointment:

Poor Chatterton! he sorrows for thy fate
Who would have praised and loved thee, ere too late.
Poor Chatterton! farewell! of darkest hues
This chaplet cast I on thy unshapen tomb;
But dare no longer on the sad theme muse,
*Lest kindred woes persuade a kindred doom:*
For oh! big gall-drops shook from Folly's wing,
Have blackened the fair promise of my spring;
And the stern Fates transpierced with viewless dart
*The last pale Hope that shivered at my heart.*

Few young poets of English origin, have written more beautiful amatory poetry than this:

O (have I sighed) were mine the wizard's rod,
Or mine the power of Proteus, changeful god!
A flower-entangled arbour I would seem
To shield my love from noontide's sultry beam:
Or bloom a myrtle, from whose odorous boughs
My love might weave gay garlands for her brows.
When twilight stole across the fading vale
To fan my love I'd be the evening gale;
Mourn in the soft folds of her swelling vest,
And flutter my faint pinions on her breast!
On seraph wing I'd float a dream by night,
To soothe my love with shadows of delight:-
Or soar aloft to be the spangled skies,
And gaze upon her with a thousand eyes!

Nor were religious sentiments unawakened:

Fair the vernal mead,
Fair the high grove, the sea, the sun, the stars;
True impress each of their creating Sire!

Yet nor high grove, nor many-coloured mead,
Nor the green Ocean with his thousand isles,
Nor the starred azure, nor the sovran sun,
E'er with such majesty of portraiture
Imaged the supreme being uncreate,
As thou, meek Saviour! at the fearless hour
When thy insulted anguish winged the prayer
Harped by archangels, when they sing of mercy!
Which when the Almighty heard from forth his throne
Diviner light filled heaven with ecstacy!
Heaven's hymnings paused: and hell her yawning mouth
Closed a brief moment.

It is delightful to dwell upon these early outpourings of an ardent and gifted soul. They lay bare the real characteristics of Coleridge. Without them our sense of his genius would be far more obscure. When these juvenile poems were written 'existence was all a feeling, not yet shaped into a thought.' Here is no mysticism or party feeling, but the simplicity and fervour of a fresh heart, touched by the beauty of the visible world, by the sufferings of genius, and the appeals of love and religion. The natural and the sincere here predominate over the studied and artificial. Time enlarged the bard's views, increased his stores of knowledge, and matured his mental powers; but his genius, as pictured in his writings, though strengthened and fertilized, thenceforth loses much of its unity. Its emanations are frequently more grand and startling, but less simple and direct. There is more machinery, and often a confusion of appliances. We feel that it is the same mind in an advanced state;—the same noble instrument breathing deeper strains, but with a melody more intricate and sad.

In the Sibylline Leaves we have depicted a later stage of the poet's life. Language is now a more effective expedient. It follows the thought with a clearer echo. It is woven with a firmer hand. The subtle intellect is

evidently at work in the very rush of emotion. The poet has discovered that he cannot hope

> "from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within."

A new sentiment, the most solemn that visits the breast of humanity, is aroused by this reflective process—the sentiment of duty. Upon the sunny landscape of youth falls the twilight of thought. A conviction has entered the bosom of the minstrel that he is not free to wander at will to the sound of his own music. His life cannot be a mere revel in the embrace of beauty. He too is a man, born to suffer and to act. He cannot throw off the responsibility of life. He must sustain relations to his fellows. The scenery that delights him assumes a new aspect. It appeals not only to his love of nature, but his sense of patriotism:

> O divine
> And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
> And most magnificent temple, in the which
> I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
> Loving the God that made me!

More tender ties bind the poet-soul to his native isle—

> A pledge of more than passing life—
> Yea, in the very name of wife.
> * * * *
> Then was I thrilled and melted, and most warm
> Impressed a father's kiss.

Thus gather the many-tinted hues of human destiny around the life of the young bard. To a mind of philosophical cast, the transition is most interesting. It is the distinguishing merit of Coleridge, that in his verse we find these epochs warmly chronicled. Most just is his vindication of himself from the charge of egotism. To what end are beings peculiarly sensitive, and capable of rare expression, sent into the world, if not to make us feel the mysteries of our nature, by faithful delineations,

drawn from their own consciousness? It is the lot, not of the individual, but of man in general, to feel the sublimity of the mountain—the loveliness of the flower—the awe of devotion—and the ecstacy of love; and we should bless those who truly set forth the traits and triumphs of our nature—the consolations and anguish of our human life. We are thus assured of the universality of Nature's laws—of the sympathy of all genuine hearts. Something of a new dignity invests the existence, whose common experience is susceptible of such portraiture. In the keen regrets, the vivid enjoyments, the agonizing remorse and the glowing aspirations recorded by the poet, we find the truest reflection of our own souls. There is a nobleness in the lineaments thus displayed, which we can scarcely trace in the bustle and strife of the world. Self-respect is nourished by such poetry, and the hope of immortality rekindled at the inmost shrine of the heart. Of recent poets, Coleridge has chiefly added to such obligations. He has directed our gaze to Mont Blanc as to an everlasting altar of praise; and kindled a perennial flame of devotion amid the snows of its cloudy summit. He has made the icy pillars of the Alps ring with solemn anthems. The pilgrim to the Vale of Chamouni shall not hereafter want a Hymn, by which his admiring soul may "wreak" itself upon expression."

> Rise, O, ever rise,
> Rise like a cloud of incense, from the earth!
> Thou kingly spirit throned among the hills,
> Thou dread ambassador from earth to heaven,
> Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
> And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
> Earth, and her thousand voices praises God.

To one other want of the heart has the muse of Coleridge given genuine expression. Fashion, selfishness, *and the* mercenary spirit of the age, have widely and

deeply profaned the very name of Love. To poetry it flies as to an ark of safety. The English bard has set apart and consecrated a spot sacred to its meditation—'midway on the mount,' 'beside the ruined tower;' and thither may we repair to cool the eye fevered with the glare of art, by gazing on the fresh verdure of nature, when

> The moonshine stealing o'er the scene
> Has blended with the lights of eve,
> And she is there, our hope, our joy,
> Our own dear Genevieve.

# KEATS.

A FEELING has gone abroad prejudicial to the manliness of Keats. Such an idea in relation to any one who has given undoubted proof of intellectual vigour, should never be confidently entertained. Strong sense generally accompanies strong feeling; and it may be fairly presumed that when a man of true force of character is chargeable with great weakness, it is usually to be ascribed more to physical and accidental causes than to any inherent and absolute defect. The whole environment of circumstances must be weighed in the balance with the genuine characteristics of the individual, before we can truly pronounce on the case. Keats was a man of a most affluent imagination, sensitive feelings, and high aims; but he was born at a livery stable; his constitution was radically feeble, and his affections grievously disappointed. Considering what a world we live in, and the traits of our common nature, this was a painful combination. Almost every young man cherishes an idea which he confidently expects to realize. A poetical mind unites with such hopes a singular intensity of purpose; failure is accordingly the signal for despair. It is not in moral enterprises as in trade. When the hopes of the heart are bankrupt, renovation is not easy; they are too often all risked upon one adventure, and when that miscarries, iron nerves and an indomitable will are required to stand *the shock*. The cherished aim of Keats was doubtless to

retrieve his social condition by the force of his genius. There was nothing presumptuous in such an anticipation. He had evinced more of the 'divine afflatus' than many English poets of good reputation, and his powers were by no means fully ripe. He had an exuberance of fancy truly wonderful—the independence to choose his own path, and an honest ambition to win the laurel which he felt was within his grasp. He published his first volume at the age of twenty-one. His political opinions and those of his associates, drew upon his literary efforts the most severe vituperation; and when Endymion appeared in 1818, it was furiously assailed by the great critical authority of the day. Gifford declared his intention of attacking it, even before its appearanee. The lowly birth of the poet, the character of his friends, and the humble nature of his early education, were turned into arrows, dipped in gall, to rankle in his sensitive heart. The courtesies of private life were invaded, and the grossest calumnies resorted to, in order to carry out the system of abuse then prevalent. With good health and a reasonable prospect of continued existence, Keats could have faced the storm. He could have lived down opprobrium, and awed a venal press by the shadow of his mature genius. But feeling that the seeds of death were already within him, and having striven in vain

'to uprear
Love's standard on the battlements of song,'

he no longer hoped 'to leave his name upon the harp-string.' He felt that he must pass away unvindicated. The criticism to which his death is commonly ascribed, was but the last of a series of painful experience. It is very unjust to select one, and that the least dignified of his trials, and represent him as thus unworthily vanquished. It was "in battalions" and not singly, that trouble overpowered him. It was physical infirmity rather than

morbid feeling, that gave fatal effect to critical abuse. The "article" was the climax, rather than the arbiter of his fate. Byron's facetious rhymes, therefore, pass for nothing. Keats was *not* "extinguished by an article." It is untrue that he was "laughed into Lethe by some quaint review." His woes were only aggravated by ridicule, and his last days embittered by the obloquy attempted to be cast on his name. It is obvious, therefore, that he was no lack-a daisical sufferer. In fact, the state of his mind was inferred rather than known. He kept his feelings to himself, and they preyed upon him the more. He possessed too much delicacy to intrude his sorrows, even upon intimate friends. He "bore his faculties so meekly," that to a kindly observer his silent griefs could not but "challenge pity." There is a strength of quiet endurance as significant of courage, as the most daring feats of prowess. Keats displayed this energy of mind to a degree which completely blunts the edge of sarcasm as applied to his sensibility. He had, says one of his friends, a face in which was visible "an eager power, checked and made patient by ill-health." Lord Byron, like all who make their personal consciousness the ground of judgment, often erred in his estimate of character. He does not appear to have made any allowance for the difference of circumstances and disposition between himself and Keats. He says the effect of the first severe criticism upon him, was "rage, resistance and redress, not despondency and despair." Very likely. He was then in high health—had rank and money to sustain him, and nothing at issue but literary fame. Keats was poor, obscurely born, his health broken, and his heart concentered on an enterprise affecting his every interest. His spirit also was too gentle to find relief in satire. Byron looked at his beautiful hand with pride, as Nature's *sign of high*-birth: Keats gazed with sadness upon his

—its veins swollen by disease; he used to say it was the hand of a man of fifty. In this one contrast, we have a token of their diversity of condition. To the one, poetry was a graceful appendage—to the other, all in all: the one, if successful with the muses, could fall back upon many an object secured by his social position and versatile nature; the other, if baffled with his lyre, was left no resource but the ungenial pathway of lowly toil:—Byron was a poet at intervals; Keats had wed himself "to things of light, from infancy." He lived but twenty-four years. His education, as far as formal teaching was concerned, he derived chiefly from a school at Enfield. At an early age he was apprenticed to a surgeon; but his fine abilities soon brought him in contact with several leading minds. His happiest hours appear to have been those dedicated to friendly converse with congenial spirits, and strolling along a pleasant lane between Hampstead and Highgate. This walk has become classic ground, frequented as it has been by such men as Coleridge, Lamb and Keats. Although the latter was convinced that his disease was fatal for three years before his death, he was induced by the hope of alleviating the symptoms and refreshing his mind with change of scene, to embark for Naples. He carried with him a breaking heart. Assiduous devotion at the bed-side of a dying brother, had wasted his little remaining strength. There was now an aimless fever in his life. The beautiful fragment of Hyperion he had not courage to complete, after the cold reception of his earlier poems. In fact he seems to have gone abroad only to die. The luxuriant beauty of Naples, and the solemn atmosphere of Rome must have pressed upon his senses with most pathetic import. No heart was ever more alive to the spell of loveliness or the charm of antiquity; but how full of "thoughts too deep for tears," must have been their language when hallowed by the shadow of death!

A few years after, one of the kings of literature came from the same northern isle, to seek renovation in that gentle clime. But his goal was reached. He had enjoyed a long and bright career. The affectionate hopes of millions followed his feeble steps. He could look back upon many years of successful achievement; and was about to depart, like the sun at his setting, encircled with the light of glory. The younger heir of fame came a weary pilgrim to the same scenes, to die in his youth, like a star that rises only to twinkle for an hour, and disappear forever. Keats was fortunate in a companion. An artist who had known him long, appreciated his character, and was blessed with a rich fund of animal spirits and kindly feeling, "sustained and soothed" the sufferer, until he tranquilly expired at Rome, Dec. 27th, 1820. How many have witnessed, in imagination, the departure of the gifted young exile! The sweet words he uttered, his patience and gentleness and poetry beamed forth to the last. He whispered his epitaph to his friend—"My name was writ in water;" and already felt the daisies growing over him! The physicians marvelled at his tenacity of life, when the vital energies were so exhausted, and said he must have long lived upon the strength of his spirit.

Sometimes a lovely day occurs in the very depth of winter at Rome. The deep blue sky and soft wind are then more than ever alluring. Such a day I chose to visit the grave of Keats, guided to its vicinity by the massive, grey pyramid, called the monument of Caius Cestus. A plain white grave-stone, in the midst of numerous other memorials of foreign sepulture, indicates the spot. The turf around was of a most vivid emerald—the sky above serenely azure—the air balmy, and the scene almost deserted. The sigh of the breeze through *a cypress*, or the chirrup of a single bird, drawn forth by

the unwonted warmth, alone broke the profound quiet of the cemetery. It seemed as if Nature was atoning to the departed for the world's harshness, by keeping a vigil of peaceful beauty at his grave.

To every poetical mind there seems to be a peculiar nucleus for thought. The sympathies flow in some particular direction; and the glow and imagery of song are excited in a certain manner, according to individual taste and character. To Scott, chivalry and all its associations, were inspiring—to Wordsworth, abstract Nature. Cowper loved to group his feelings and fancies around moral truth; and Pope to weave into verse the phenomena of social life. The poetical sympathies of Keats were strongly attracted by Grecian mythology. This was unfortunate as regards his prospect of fame. Neptune and Venus do not win the popular attention like Tam O'Shanter, Marmion, or Childe Harold. Diverse as are these personages, they are all far nearer to the heart of man; they come more within the common view than the Pagan deities. The life of a great man of modern times, finds far more readers in this age than a classical dictionary. On the other hand, Keats found in the field he selected, a freedom of range which his warm fancy craved. Among the Grecian gods he could indulge in the most luxuriant invention; he could draw pictures of beauty, and visions of bliss, and tales of passion, according to an ideal standard. In this enchanted ground he need not conform to the actual, but his thoughts could be "as free of wing as Eden's garden bird;" and his muse emulate "the large utterance of the early gods." We have frequent evidence of his love of these themes.:

> Behold! he walks
> On Heaven's pavement; brotherly he talks
> To divine powers: from his hand, full fain,
> Jung's proud birds are pecking early grain:

He tries the nerve of Phœbus' golden bow,
And asketh where the golden apples grow:
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,
And strives in vain to unsettle and wield
A Jovian thunderbolt.*

It was his delight to see

Phœbus in the morning;
Or flushed Aurora in the roseate dawning;
Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream;
Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam.†

In these ambitious attempts, the young poet paid little attention to artificial rules of versification. The lines run into one another with scarcely any view to the effect of the pause. The rhymes seem often forced. Fancy rather than form—sentiment rather than art, predominate. The couplets are often illegitimately joined; but their offspring, born "in the lusty stealth of nature," frequently o'ertop more regular aspirants for the favour of the muses. The mould of his early creations was a secondary object with Keats; but it should be borne in mind that good rhymes are common, but men of original poetical power, rare. It is conceded, also, that an occasional unauthorized expression must be added to the sin of careless versification. Few critics can be expected to pass, unlashed, such words as "lush," "wingedly," "'minish," "graspable," "hoveringly," and the like. He seems to have often written without forethought or revision. There is a very spontaneous air about his long poems. They flow out like a spring set loose, winding along in a vagrant and free course. This kind of poetical audacity is very provoking to critics, and doubtless incited them not a little in their endeavours to crush the new-fledged warbler. Palpable as are the artistical de-

* Endymion. † Epistle to Matthew.

fects of most of the poetry of Keats, its bold and singular beauties are equally apparent. And herein consists the shame of these "invisible infallibilities," as some one calls reviewers,—that with the sense to perceive the crude and incorrect structure, they lacked soul to feel the exquisite sentiment and sweet imagery of these poems. They should have remembered, that a good versifier is no uncommon personage; but a creative genius is not vouchsafed to this planet every day. They should have acknowledged that study can reform a careless style; but that no such process can give birth to thoughts of poetic beauty. While, as experienced observers, they suggest an improved manner to the young bard, they should have cordially—ay, reverently hailed the credentials Keats proffered of his high mission, and blest the advent of a poet soul. A few glances over these poems would have furnished rich proofs of their promise, and won attention from their defects. Here and there, a loving eye could certainly have discerned perfect gems, even of style, and perceived a freshness, freedom and power of fancy, unequalled in English verse. But blind attachment to an obsolete school of poetry—as if such a thing were possible—political considerations, the factitious influence of birth, companionship and fortune, were suffered to magnify every fault, and dwarf all excellence. There are those who cannot welcome an angel with ruffled wings!

A casual survey will discover felicitous touches of description, enough to indicate to any candid mind, how full of poetry was the soul of Keats. He speaks of the "patient brilliance of the moon," "and the quaint mossiness of aged roots." Whoso feels not the force of such words, will look in vain for the poetic, either in life or literature. Here are a few traces of the footsteps of genius, taken at hazard, like wild-flowers from among the grass:

. . . . Autumn bold
With universal tinge of sober gold.

—

. . . . Vesper
Summons all the downiest clouds together
For the sun's purple couch.

—

. . . . Time, that aged nurse,
Rocked me to patience.

—

. . Silence came heavily again,
Feeling about for its old couch of space
And airy cradle.

—

. . . . Cold, O! cold indeed
Were her fair limbs, and *like a common weed*
*The sea-swell took her hair.*

—

. . ere the hot sun count
His dewy rosary on the eglantine.

—

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot.

—

A lively prelude, fashioning the way
In which the voice should wander.

—

. . . the silver flow
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires.

—

. . . . He ne'er is crowned
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead.

—

. . . . Now indeed
His senses had swooned off: he did not heed
The sudden silence, or the whispers low,
Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe,
Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,
Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms.

Such turns of thought and sweet fancies, and they abound in the poetry of Keats, would suggest to any tasteful and unprejudiced mind, the warmest hopes of poetical success. They occur, indeed, in the midst of blemishes, and the way to them is sometimes fatiguing; but all the serious deficiences of the poet flow from the exuberance, rather than the paucity of his gifts. A charge of effeminacy has sometimes been preferred against his warmer pictures and the tone of his sentiment. This is to be ascribed, in a great measure, to his want of bodily energy. A very sensitive and earnest heart in a feeble body, is apt to give birth, in fanciful creations, to an over-softness of portraiture. There is sometimes too much of the languor of reacting passion. Endymion and other of his heroes, faint and sleep, and almost "die, like Raphael, in the arms of love." It is said that Keats acknowledged, with regret, having occasionally written when his mind was not sufficiently braced to its task, and when a luxuriant imagination was suffered to expend itself, unsustained by due judgment. Such lapses were, however, but occasional and temporary. The poet's organization from its very delicacy, seems to have been peculiarly favourable to luxurious impressions. We can easily imagine such a man basking with delight in the fragrant sunshine of spring, or wrapt in quiet delight over a Grecian vase or a beautiful countenance. He has one or two festal descriptions which are quite delicious:

> . . . . recline
> Upon these living flowers. Here is wine
> Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,
> Since Ariadne was a vintager,
> So cool a purple: taste these juicy pears,
> Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears
> Were high about Pomona: here is cream
> Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam;

Sweeter than that nurse Almathea skimm'd
For the boy Jupiter: and here undimmed
By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums
Ready to melt between an infant's gums:
And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees
In starlight by the three Hesperides.*

—

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanchèd linen, smooth and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum and gourd;
With jellies sweeter than the creamy curd,
And lucid syrops tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spicèd dainties, every one,
From silken Sarmacand to cedar'd Lebanon.†

Perhaps, there is more cant than strict truth, in what is often said about the early promise of a poet who dies young. Perhaps we sometimes mistake the fruit for the blossom. What though the minstrel has struck his harp but for an hour? Perchance that brief space has called forth its deepest harmony. What though the early-called has not written an epic or a tragedy? If we look thoughtfully at his lyric or sonnet, we shall discover, it may be, the essence of his genius there preserved. What if he died young? There is a poetry that cannot survive youth. We are ever lamenting that an admired bard does not undertake a great work, when it is more than probable that such an office is not adapted to his powers. Thanatopsis is as precious as if it formed part of some long poem, which few would read. If it is objected that the poetical efforts of our day are fragmentary, let it be remembered that our times, our reading, and our very life, partake of the same character. It is not the amount nor the form, but the intrinsic excellence of poetic creations, which is our highest concern. Some of the most

* Endymion. † Eve of St. Agnes.

living and true verses in our language, have been written in youth. It is the divine peculiarity of the art that it demands not, but rather repudiates the lessons of life that prudence extols. The young poet sometimes executes what the old philosopher cannot appreciate. In the freshness of the soul are often taken its noblest flights. The dreams of youth are sometimes the most truly glorious efforts of the human mind. The poetry of Keats is not all a "feverish attempt;" it is often a mature result. He has at least left one poem, which, for invention, structure, imagery, and all the elements of the art, is as faultless and as rare a gem as can be found in English literature. Judged by its own law, it is a production of itself sufficient to stamp its author with the name of a poet. If it does not live, it will be because taste and the love of the beautiful have died. The "Eve of St. Agnes" is a delightful and original performance. What an idea of cold the first stanza conveys:

> St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
> The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
> The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
> And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
> Numb were the Beadman's fingers, while he told
> His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
> Like pious incense from a censer old,
> Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
> Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

This description of moonlight streaming through a stained glass-window, is acknowledged to be unrivalled:

> Full on the casement shone the wintry moon,
> And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
> As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon:
> Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
> And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
> And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
> She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
> Save wings, for heaven.

What poet ever described a maiden unrobing in terms of such delicate yet graphic beauty as these?

> Anon her heart revives: her vespers done,
> Of all its wreathéd pearls her hair she frees;
> Unclasps her warmèd jewels one by one;
> Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
> Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
> Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
> Pensive awhile she dreams awake, &c.

Nor is this all. The poet follows the fair creature to her couch, and describes her soul in sleep, as

> Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;
> Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
> Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
> *As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.*

With this last exquisite metaphor, I take leave of Keats. His genius was a flower of uncommon richness; and, although he meekly laments that it had "no depth to strike in," its bloom and perfume will never cease to charm—for he has truly said, that

> A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

# BARRY CORNWALL.

When the smiles of the muse brighten the intervals of a professional life, when she scatters flowers along the path of toilsome duty, and proffers a refreshing cup to the wayfarer, how pleasant and cheering is her aspect! Then we forget the annals of privation and despondency with which the idea of a poet is too often associated. We bless the art that keeps alive, in the midst of worldly influences, the original beauty of the soul. We hail as divine the inspiration that, from time to time, woos the busy denizen of a crowded metropolis to the altar of a sweet and high communion. Thus the ideal redeems the actual. Thus the mind casts off its work-day vestments, and is arrayed anew in the white robe of childhood: and the heart is freed from the harsh fetters of care and custom, to grow brave and fresh again in the holy air of song. Of the many aspects which the poetic life exhibits, there is none more benign than this; and perhaps in no country is it more frequently presented than our own. Some of the noblest effusions, which we read with a glow of pride at the thought of their American origin, sprung earnestly from musings that intervals of leisure afforded. Like wild flowers that shed a delicate odour from the interstices of a rocky cliff, they come forth in the holiday moments of a toilsome life. And for this very cause are they often more vigorous and lovely. It is erroneous to commiserate too strongly the ungenial

existence to which many poets are doomed. Perhaps there are no warmer lovers of the muse than those who are only permitted occasionally to gain her favours. The shrine is more reverently approached by the pilgrim from afar than the familiar worshipper. Poetry is often more beloved by one whose daily vocation is amid the bustle of the world. We read of a fountain in Arabia upon whose basin is inscribed "drink and away;" but how delicious is that hasty draught, and how long and brightly the thought of its transient refreshment dwells in the memory! Contrast is a great element of mental activity. The mind of the scholar often becomes dull and morbid from the very monotony of his impressions; while the man of ideal spirit, whose lot is cast amid stern realities, turns with a passionate interest and the keenest relish to intellectual pastime and poetic freedom. His productions often have a glow and life which men of ampler opportunities vainly strive to attain; and the spirit of love in which he labours makes bright and moving the graces of his song. Thus, although Mr. Procter tells us that

> ———the spirit languishes and lies
> At mercy of life's dull realities;

Yet again he exclaims—

> Oh! never shall thy name, sweet Poesy,
> Be flung away or trampled by the crowd,
> As a thing of little worth, while I aloud
> May (with a feeble voice indeed,) proclaim
> The sanctity, the beauty of thy name.
> Thy grateful servant am I, for thy power
> Has solaced me through many a wretched hour;
> In sickness, ay, when frame and spirit sank,
> I turned me to thy crystal cup and drank
> Intoxicating draughts

And again:

> ———although the muse and I have parted,
> She to her airy height and I to toil,

Not discontent, nor wroth, nor gloomy-hearted,
Because I now must till a rugged soil.

With learnéd Milton, Steele, and Shakspere sage
I commune when the labouring day is over,
Filled with a deep delight, like some true lover
Whom frowning fate may not entirely sever
From her whose love, perhaps, is lost forever.

Procter was at Harrow, with Byron, and while his noble classmate was enjoying the leisure that fortune secures, gave his youthful hours to the dry tasks of a conveyancer. At the town of Calne, in Wiltshire, where he was placed in the office of a solicitor, his social advantages were great, for among the residents were Crabbe, Moore and Bowles. The early diversity in the circumstances of Byron and Procter marked their subsequent career. Of the noble poet about as much is known as it is possible to communicate. The most minute details of his life have become public property. His path has been traced in all its windings, the particulars of his daily conduct "set in a note-book," and his most casual talk chronicled. Within a very few years, a play was duly represented in the north of Italy, entitled "Lord Byron at Venice," in which fact and fiction were ludicrously blended. If Procter has no claim to such genius as his juvenile companion—if, as he says,

At Harrow, where, as here *he* has a name,
I—I 'm not even on the list of fame;

There remains to the humbler bard rich consolation in the thought of having escaped that microscopic inspection and universal comment which marred the peace, and profaned the reputation of Byron. Even when the young solicitor chose to emerge from obscurity, and present his meek appeal for a place in the English Parnassus, he came before the public under the assumed name of Barry Cornwall. This title has now become endeared to the

lovers of poetry, and is associated with charming graces of diction and overflowings of sentiment that make its very mention like the tone of a favourite instrument. It is easily gathered from the writings of Procter that his life, devoted as it mainly has been to professional labour, boasts a tasteful spirit;—that genius has redeemed and hallowed it, and that music, books, and flowers, the love of woman, the presence of childhood, the companionship of the good and the gifted, and fond dalliance with the muses, have kept fresh the dreams of youth, and brightened the stream of daily thought with the starlight of poetry.

The better moments of this man, as revealed in his writings, bespeak him of a gentle nature and a modest bearing. Ill health and a meditative disposition give a pleasing melancholy to many of his productions, but it is mingled with a quiet enthusiasm and native tenderness that charm without exciting. His most original efforts are the Dramatic Scenes. In certain points of style, these are modelled upon the old English dramas; but they abound with a winning simplicity and graceful sentiment evidently born in the poet's mind. There is nothing stilted or strained in their flow. Like clear streams winding beneath odorous branches; amid flowery banks, in the soft moonbeams or cheerful sunshine, they steal pleasantly onward. They enlist the reader's sympathy by a kind of delicate truthfulness, and lead him, as they did the public at their first appearance, cordially to hail the author as a genuine poet. "Mirandola" is a tragedy which combines not a few of the merits of the "Dramatic Scenes," and the dialogue is throughout interesting. "Marcian Colonna" contains passages of peculiar power, and describes some of the most subtle of human feelings with rare skill. The rhyme is, perhaps, *too unstudied*, and the metre and manner free even to

carelessness, but there are many felicitous turns of thought and expression to balance such defects. "The Flood of Thessaly" is an uncommon blank verse poem. It is well sustained, and exhibits sometimes a Miltonic command of language. Beside these and many other elaborate poems, Barry Cornwall has written a volume of songs, many of which have become favourites from their feeling tone and tasteful simplicity.

A peculiar attraction in the poetry of this author, is a certain spontaneous manner which gives the idea of sincerity. His best efforts seem unpremeditated. They begin as if he knew not how they would end. He appears to write as the bee stores its honey, from an instinctive principle. There is an apparent absence of art, a tone of quiet inspiration analogous to that of an improvisatore. Some beautiful object, some touching narrative or moving experience captivates his mind, and, as if impelled by the enthusiasm of the moment, he puts it into rhyme, pausing as he goes along, to indulge in a sympathizing reverie, or turn aside with an ardent apostrophe. Expression would appear easy to Barry Cornwall. Few traces of retention of thought and dearth of language are discoverable. This delightful freedom, this apparent unconsciousness of critical barriers and rules of diction, give a flowing grace and a captivating ease to verse that to many readers is an essential charm. It is akin to the pleasure of hearing a singer who appears to warble like a bird, without effort. But the facility is dangerous. It leads to haste, carelessness, want of finish, and repetition of ideas. The poet's gold is often beaten out until it becomes thin and weak; the frame is too loose to hold the picture; the beautiful image loses its fine outline, and the deep sentiment its force, for want of concentration and delicate care. And such are the blemishes in the poetry of Procter. Yet certain portions of his poems are wrought with exquisite

skill, and display a verbal as well as an intrinsic beauty, like the dainty phrases which writers of taste cull from the old dramatists.

Here are some beautiful thoughts sweetly uttered:

. . . . How fine
And marvellous the subtle intellect is,
Beauty's creator! it adorns the body,
And lights it like a star. It shines forever,
And, like, a watch-tower to the infidel,
Shows there's a land to come.

. . . .The mind is full
Of curious changes that perplex itself,
Just like the visible world; and the heart ebbs
Like the great sea, first flows and then retires:
And on the passions doth the spirit ride,
Through sunshine and in rain, from good to ill,
Then to deep vice, and so on back to virtue;
Till in the grave, that universal calm,
We sleep the sleep eternal.

In budding, happiness is likest wo:
Great thought is pain until the strengthened mind
Can lift it into light: the soul is blind
Until the suns of years have cleared away
The film that hangeth round its wedded clay.
Half the ills we hoard within our hearts,
Are ills because we hoard them.

As specimens of fine imagery, take the following:

A month ago I was happy! No;
Not happy, yet encircled by deep joy,
Which, though 'twas all around, I could not touch.
But it was ever thus with Happiness:
*It is the gay to-morrow of the mind*
*That never comes.*

. . . . No matter.
I'll take my way alone. and burn away—
Evil or good I care not, so I spread
Tremendous desolation on my road:
*I'll be remembered as huge meteors are,*
*By the dismay they scatter.*

I seem to go
Calmly, yet with a melancholy step,
Onward, and onward. Is there not a tale
Of some man (an Arabian as I think)
Who sailed upon the wide sea many days,
Tossing about, the sport of winds and waters,
Until he saw an isle toward which his ship
Suddenly turned? there is: and he was drawn,
As by a magnet on, slowly, until
The vessel neared the isle; and then it flew
Quick as a shooting star, and dashed itself
To pieces. Methinks I am that man.

—

She came amidst the lovely and the proud,
Peerless; and when she moved the gallant crowd
Divided, *as the obsequious vapors light*
*Divide to let the queen moon pass by night.*

—

. . . . Hail
Shot shattering down, and thunders roared aloud,
*And the wild lightning from his dripping shroud*
*Unbound his arrowy pinions blue and pale,*
*And darted through the heavens.*

Sentiment is the characteristic of Barry Cornwall. He certainly has written some descriptive fragments of striking beauty, but his pictures of scenery possess no great originality. They remind us of other poets. Their traits are of a general kind, and do not often constitute the chief attraction of the poem. It is in unfolding a sentiment, in giving expression to feeling, that we chiefly recognize the individuality of this minstrel. Whatever the reader may think of his eye for nature or the scope of his fancy, he cannot fail to realize his sensibility and tenderness. He evidently delights in portraying the workings of the heart. Without the passion of Byron, the directness of Burns, or the reflective power of Wordsworth, Barry Cornwall possesses a delicacy and refined earnestness of soul that enables him to speak of

love with a rare and touching grace. Hence his poems are chiefly based upon tales of "the sweet south." He has sought in warm climes and among an imaginative race the materials of his song. There is no modern English poet who surpasses our author in delineating the tender passion. His women are like those of Shakspere, the very creatures of affection. They live and move only in an atmosphere of sentiment. Scattered through his works we have the most charming delineations of human feeling as modified by mental refinement and a fanciful spirit. There is a kind of staple imagery for love-scenes that is easily appropriated. A very respectable tone of devotion can be invented without difficulty; but the poetry of affection that moves, must be sincere. It must spring from a nature capable of deep and romantic feeling. Its hues must be caught from the rosy flame it would depict; and its tenderness flow from the fountains of emotion in the heart of the bard. Thus is it with much of the poetry of Barry Cornwall, as a few concluding extracts will illustrate:

I thought thou wast my better angel, doomed
To guide me through this solitary life
To some far-off immortal place,
Where spirits of good assemble to keep watch,
Till the foundations of the Earth shall fail.
*I loved thee as became mortality*
*Glancing at heaven.*

— — —

. . . . I have quaffed
Life from the lips of beauty, and shall I
Who 've banqueted like a god, be now content
With meagre fare, or trust to mortal drugs,
*And run a common idler through the world,*
*With not a heart to own me?*

— — —

Oh! thou bright Heaven, if thou art calling now
Thy brighter angels to thy bosom-rest,
*For lo!* the brightest of thy host is gone—

Departed—and the earth is dark below.
From land to land I 'll roam, in all a stranger,
*And as the body gains a braver look*
*By staring in the face of many winds,*
*So from the sad aspects of different things*
*My soul shall pluck a courage and bear up*
*Against the past.*

—

. . . My love, my love!
How proudly will we pass our lives together;
*And wander heart-linked through the busy world,*
*Like birds in Eastern story.*

—

Give me an intellectual, nobler life;
Not fighting like the herded elephants, which,
Beckoned by some fierce slave, go forth to war,
And trample in the dust their fellow-brute.
But let *me* live amongst high thoughts and smiles
As beautiful as love; with grasping hands,
*And a heart that flutters with diviner life,*
*Where'er my step is heard.*

—

My own sweet love! oh! my dear, peerless wife!
By the blue sky and all its crowding stars,
I love you better—oh! far better than
Woman was ever loved. There's not an hour
Of day or dreaming night but I am with thee:
There's not a wind but whispers of thy name,
And not a flower that sleeps beneath the moon
But in its hues or fragrance tells a tale
Of thee, my love, to thy Mirandola.

—

. . . . No voice of parent spoke
Ungentle words, which now too often mar
Life's first fair passion: then no gods of gold
Usurping swayed with bitter tyranny
That sad domain, the heart. Love's rule was free,
(Ranging through boundless air, and happy heaven
And earth,) when Pyrrha wed the Titan's son.

—

. . . . there she pined,
Pale as a prophetess whose labouring mind

Gives out its knowledge; *but her upraised eyes*
*Shone with the languid light of one who loves or dies.*

Then Love came—Love! How like a star it streamed
In infancy upon me, till I dreamed,
And 't was as pure and almost cold a light,
And led me to the sense of such delight
As children know not; so at last I grew
Enamour'd of beauty and soft pain,
And felt mysterious pleasure wander through
My heart, and animate my childish brain.

He loved: Oh how he loved! his heart was full
Of that immortal passion, which alone
Holds through the wide world its eternal rule
Supreme, and with its deep, seducing tone,
Winneth the wise, the young, the beautiful,
The brave, and all to bow before its throne;
The sun and soul of life, the end, the gain,
The rich requital of an age of pain.

O, melancholy Love! amid thy fears,
Thy darkness, thy despair, there runs a vein
Of pleasure, like a smile 'midst many tears—
The pride of sorrow that will not complain—
*The exultation that in after years*
*The loved one will discover—and in vain,*
*How much the heart silently in its cell*
*Did suffer till it broke, yet nothing tell.*

Else—wherefore else doth lovely woman keep
Lock'd in her heart of hearts, from every gaze
Hidden, her struggling passion—wherefore weep
In grief that never while it flows allays
Those tumults in the bosom buried deep,
And robs her bright eyes of their natural rays.
*Creation's sweetest riddle! yet remain*
*Just as thou art—man's only worthy gain.*

Oh power of love, so fearful and so fair—
Life of our life on earth, yet kin to care—
Oh! thou day-dreaming spirit, who dost look
Upon the future as the charmed book
Of Fate, were opened to thine eyes alone—

Thou who dost cull from moments stolen and gone
Into eternity, memorial things,
To deck the days to come—thy revellings
Were glorious and beyond all others. Thou
Didst banquet upon beauty once; and now
The ambrosial feast is ended! Let it be
Enough to say, "*it was.*" Oh! upon me
From thy o'ershadowing wings ethereal
Shake odorous airs, so may my senses all
Be spell-bound to thy service, beautiful power,
And on the breath of every coming hour
Send me faint tidings of the things that were.

---

Quick are fond women's sights and clear their powers,
They live in moments years, an age in hours;
Through every movement of the heart they run
In a brief period with a courser's speed,
And mark, decide, reject; but if indeed
They smile on us—oh! as the eternal sun
Forms and illuminates all to which this earth,
Impregnate by his glance, has given birth,
Even so the smile of woman stamps our fates,
*And consecrates the love it first creates!*

# MRS. HEMANS.

We have heard much of late regarding the rights and sphere of woman. The topic has become trite. One branch of the discussion, however, is worthy of careful notice—the true theory of cultivated and liberal men on the subject. This has been greatly misunderstood. The idea has been often suggested that man is jealous of his alleged intellectual superiority, while little has been advanced in illustration of his genuine reverence for female character. Because the other sex cannot always find erudition so attractive as grace in woman, and strong mental traits so captivating as a beautiful disposition, it is absurdly argued that mind and learning are only honoured in masculine attire. The truth is, men of feeling instinctively recognize something higher than intellect. They feel that a noble and true soul is greater and more delightful than mere reason, however powerful; and they know that to this, extensive knowledge and active logical powers are not essential. It is not the attainments, or the literary talent, that they would have women abjure. They only pray that through and above these may appear the woman. They desire that the harmony of Nature may not be disturbed; that the essential foundations of love may not be invaded; that the sensibility, delicacy and quiet enthusiasm of the female heart may continue to awaken in man the tender reverence, which *is one of* the most elevating of his sentiments.

Portia is highly intellectual; but even while arrayed in male costume and enacting the public advocate, the essential and captivating characteristics of her true sex inspire her mien and language. Vittoria Colonna was one of the most gifted spirits of her age—the favourite companion of Michael Angelo, but her life and works were but the eloquent development of exalted womanhood. Madame Roland displayed a strength of character singularly heroic, but her brave dignity was perfectly feminine. Isabella of Spain gave evidence of a mind remarkably comprehensive, and a rare degree of judgment; yet in perusing her history, we are never beguiled from the feeling of her queenly character. There is an essential quality of sex, to be felt rather than described, and it is when this is marred, that a feeling of disappointment is the consequence. It is as if we should find violets growing on a tall tree. The triumphs of mind always command respect, but their style and trophies have diverse complexions in the two sexes. It is only when these distinctions are lost, that they fail to interest. It matters not how erudite or mentally gifted a woman may be, so that she remains in manner and feeling a woman. Such is the idea that man loves to see realized; and in cherishing it, he gives the highest proof of his estimation of woman. He delights to witness the exercise of her noblest prerogative. He is charmed to behold her in the most effective attitude. He appreciates too truly the beauty and power of her nature to wish to see it arrayed in any but a becoming dress. There is such a thing as female science, philosophy and poetry, as there is female physiognomy and taste; not that their absolute qualities differ in the two sexes, but their relative aspect is distinct. Their sphere is as large and high, and infinitely more delicate and deep than that of man, though not so obvious. When they overstep their appropriate domain,

much of their mental influence is lost. Freely and purely exerted, it is at once recognized and loved. Man delights to meet woman in the field of letters as well as in the arena of social life. There also is she his better angel. With exquisite satisfaction he learns at her feet the lessons of mental refinement and moral sensibility. From her teachings he catches a grace and sentiment unwritten by his own sex. Especially in poetry, beams, with starlike beauty, the light of her soul. There he reads the records of a woman's heart. He hears from her own lips how the charms of Nature and the mysteries of Life have wrought in her bosom. Of such women, Mrs. Hemans is the most cherished of our day.

Life is the prime source of literature, and especially of its most effective and universal departments. Poetry should, therefore, be the offspring of deep experience. Otherwise it is superficial and temporary. What phase of existence is chiefly revealed to woman? Which domain of experience is she best fitted by her nature and position to illustrate? Undoubtedly, the influence and power of the affections. In these, her destiny is more completely involved, through these her mind more exclusively acts, than is the case with our sex. Accordingly, her insight is greater, and her interest more extensive in the sphere of the heart. With a quicker sympathy, and a finer perception, will she enter into the history and results of the affections. Accordingly, when the mantle of song falls upon a woman, we cannot but look for new revelations of sentiment. Not that the charms of Nature and the majesty of great events may not appropriately attract her muse; but with and around these, if she is a true poetess, we see ever entwined the delicate flowers that flourish in the atmosphere of home, and are reared to full maturity only under the training of woman. Thus *the poetic* in her character finds free development. She

can here speak with authority. It is, indeed, irreverent to dictate to genius, but the themes of female poetry are written in the very structure of the soul. Political economy may find devotees among the gentler sex; and so an approach to the mental hardihood of Lady Macbeth may appear once in the course of an age; whereas, every year we light on the traces of a Juliet, a Cleopatra and an Isabel. The spirit of Mrs. Hemans in all she has written, is essentially feminine. Various as are her subjects, they are stamped with the same image and superscription. She has drawn her prevailing vein of feeling from one source. She has thrown over all her effusions, not so much the drapery of knowledge, or the light of extensive observation, as the warm and shifting hues of the heart. These she had at command. She knew their effect, and felt their mystery. Hence the lavish confidence with which she devoted them to the creations of fancy and the illustration of truth.

From the voice of her own consciousness, Mrs. Hemans realized what a capacity of joy and sorrow, of strength and weakness, exists in the human heart. This she made it her study to unfold. The "Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy," is, as Byron said when it appeared, a very good poem. It is a fine specimen of heroic verse. The subject is treated with judgment and ability, and the spirit which pervades the work is precisely what the occasion demanded. Still we feel that any cultivated and ideal mind might have produced the poem. There are no peculiar traits, no strikingly original conceptions. The same may be said of several of her long pieces. It is in the "Songs of the Affections," and the "Records of Woman," that the poetess is preëminently excellent. Here the field is emphatically her own. She ranges it with a free step and a queenly bearing; and everywhere rich flowers spring up in her path, and a glowing atmosphere, like the

rosy twilight of her ancestral land, enlivens and illumines her progress. In these mysterious ties of love, there is to her a world of poetry. She not only celebrates their strength and mourns their fragility, but with pensive ardour, dwells on their eternal destiny. The birth, the growth, the decline, the sacrifices, the whole morality and spirituality of human love, is recognized and proclaimed by her muse. Profoundly does she feel the richness and the sadness, the glory and the gloom, involved in the affections. She thinks it

> A fearful thing that Love and Death may dwell
> In the same world!

And reverently she declares that

> . . . . He that sits above
> In his calm glory, will forgive the love
> His creatures bear each other, even if blent
> With a vain worship, for its close is dim
> Ever with grief, which leads the wrung soul back to Him.

Devotion continually blends with and exalts her views of human sentiment:

> I know, I know our love
> Shall yet call gentle angels from above,
> By its undying fervor. . . . .
>
> —
>
> Oh! we have need of patient faith below,
> To clear away the mysteries of wo!

Bereavement has found in Mrs. Hemans, a worthy recorder of its deep and touching poetry:

> But, oh! sweet Friend! we dream not of Love's might
> Till Death has robed with soft and solemn light
> The image we enshrine!—Before *that* hour,
> We have but glimpses of the o'ermastering power
> Within us laid!—*then* doth the spirit-flame
> With sword-like lightning rend its mortal frame;
> The wings of that which pants to follow fast,
> Shake their clay-bars, as with a prisoned blast,—
> *The sea is in our souls!* . . . .
>
> —

But thou! whose thoughts have no blest home above,
Captive of earth! and canst thou dare to *love?*
To nurse such feelings as delight to rest
Within that hallowed shrine a parent's breast?

—

To fix each hope, concentrate every tie,
On one frail idol,—destined but to die!
Yet mock the faith that points to worlds of light,
Where severed souls, made perfect, re-unite?
Then tremble! cling to every passing joy,
Twined with the life a moment may destroy!
If there be sorrow in a parting tear,
Still let "*forever*" vibrate on thine ear!
If some bright hour on rapture's wing hath flown,
Find more than anguish in the thought—'tis gone;
Go! to a voice such magic influence give,
Thou canst not lose its melody and live;
And make an eye the lode-star of thy soul,
And let a glance the springs of thought control;
Gaze on a mortal form with fond delight,
Till the fair vision mingles with thy sight;
There seek thy blessings, there repose thy trust,
Lean on the willow, idolize the dust!
Then when thy treasure best repays thy care,
Think on that dread "*forever*," and despair.

The distinguishing attribute of the poetry of Mrs. Hemans is feeling. She sings fervently of the King of Arragon, musing upon his slain brother, in the midst of a victorious festival,—of the brave boy perishing at the battle of the Nile, at the post assigned him by his father,—of Del Carpio upbraiding the treacherous king:—

"Into these glassy eyes put light,—be still! keep down thine ire,—
Bid these white lips a blessing speak, this earth is *not* my sire!
Give me back him for whom I strove, for whom my blood was shed,—
Thou canst not—and a king?—His dust be mountains on thy head!"
He loosed the steed; his slack hand fell,—upon the silent face
He cast one long, deep, troubled look,—then turned from that sad place,

His hope was crushed, his after-fate untold in martial strain,—
His banner led the spears no more amidst the hills of Spain.

With how true a sympathy does she trace the prison musings of Arabella Stuart, portray the strife of the heart in the Greek bride, and the fidelity of woman in the wife soothing her husband's dying agonies on the wheel! What a pathetic charm breathes in the pleadings of the "Adopted Child," and the meeting of Tasso and his Sister. How well she understood the hopelessness of ideal love!

O ask not, hope thou not too much
Of sympathy below—
Few are the hearts whence one same touch
Bid the sweet fountains flow:
Few and by still conflicting powers,
Forbidden here to meet—
Such ties would make this world of ours
Too fair for aught so fleet.

Nor is it alone in mere sensibility that the poetess excels. The loftiness and the dignity of her sex has few nobler interpreters. What can be finer in its kind than the Swiss wife's appeal to her husband's patriotism? Her poems abound in the worthiest appeals to woman's faith:

Her lot is on you—silent tears to weep,
And patient smiles to wear through Suffering's hour,
And sumless riches from Affection's deep,
To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower!
And to make idols, and to find them Clay,
And to bewail their worship—therefore pray!

To depict the parting grief of the Hebrew mother, the repentant tears of Cœur de Lion at his father's bier, the home associations of the Eastern stranger at the sight of a palm-tree—these, and such as these, were congenial themes to Mrs. Hemans. Joyous as is her welcome to *Spring*, thoughts of the departed solemnize its beauty. *She invokes* the Ocean not for its gems and buried gold,

but for the true and brave that sleep in its bosom. The bleak arrival of the New-England Pilgrims, and the evening devotion of the Italian peasant-girl, are equally consecrated by her muse. Where there is profound love, exalted patriotism, and "a faith touching all things with hues of Heaven,"—there she rejoiced to expatiate. Fair as Elysium appeared to her fancy, she celebrates its splendour only to reproach its rejection of the lowly and the loved;

For the most loved are they,
Of whom Fame speaks not with her clarion voice
In regal halls! the shades o'erhung their way,
The vale with its deep fountain is their choice,
And gentle hearts rejoice
Around their steps! till silently they die,
As a stream shrinks from summer's burning eye.

And the world knows not then,
Not then, nor ever, what pure thoughts are fled!
Yet these are they that on the souls of men
Come back, when night her folding veil hath spread,
The long remembered dead!
But not with *thee* might aught save glory dwell—
Fade, fade away, thou shore of Asphodel!

It was the opinion of Dr. Spurzheim, an accurate and benevolent observer of life, that suffering was essential to the rich development of female character. It is interesting to trace the influence of disappointment and trial in deepening and exalting the poetry of Mrs. Hemans. From the sentimental character of her muse, results the sameness of which some readers complain in perusing her works. This apparent monotony only strikes us when we attempt to read them consecutively. But such is not the manner in which we should treat a poetess who so exclusively addresses our feelings. Like Petrarch's sonnets, her productions delight most when separately enjoyed. Her careful study of poetry as an art, and her truly

conscientious care in choosing her language and forming her verse, could not, even if it were desirable, prevent the formation of a certain style. It is obvious, also, that her efforts are unequal. The gems, however, are more profusely scattered, than through the same amount of writing by almost any other modern poet. The department of her muse was a high and sacred one. The path she pursued was one especially heroic, inasmuch as her efforts imply the exertion of great enthusiasm. Such lyrics as we love in her pages, are "fresh from the fount of feeling." They have stirred the blood of thousands. They have kindled innumerable hearts on both sides of the sea. They have strewn imperishable flowers around the homes and graves of two nations. They lift the thoughts, like an organ's peal, to a "better land," and quicken the purest sympathies of the soul into a truer life and more poetic beauty.

The taste of Mrs. Hemans was singularly elegant. She delighted in the gorgeous and imposing. There is a remarkable fondness for splendid combination, warlike pomp, and knightly pageantry betrayed in her writings. Her fancy seems bathed in a Southern atmosphere. We trace her Italian descent in the very flow and imagery of her verse. There is far less of Saxon boldness of design and simplicity of outline, than of the rich colouring and luxuriant grouping of a warmer clime. Akin to this trait was her passion for Art. She used to say that Music was part of her life. In fact, the mind of the poetess was essentially romantic. Her muse was not so easily awakened by the sight of a beautiful object, as by the records of noble adventure. Her interest was chiefly excited by the brave and touching in human experience. Nature attracted her rather from its associations with God and humanity, than on account of its abstract and absolute qualities. This forms the great distinction between

her poetry and that of Wordsworth. In the midst of the fine scenery of Wales, her infant faculties unfolded. There began her acquaintance with life and books. We are told of her great facility in acquiring languages, her relish of Shakspere at the age of six, and her extraordinary memory. It is not difficult to understand how her ardent feelings and rich imagination developed, with peculiar individuality, under such circumstances. Knightly legends, tales of martial enterprise—the poetry of courage and devotion, fascinated her from the first. But when her deeper feelings were called into play, and the latent sensibilities of her nature sprung to conscious action, much of this native romance was transferred to the scenes of real life, and the struggles of the heart.

The earlier and most elaborate of her poems are, in a great measure, experimental. It seems as if a casual fancy for the poetic art gradually matured into a devoted love. Mrs. Hemens drew her power less from perception than sympathy. Enthusiasm, rather than graphic talent, is displayed in her verse. We shall look in vain for any remarkable pictures of the outward world. Her great aim was not so much to describe as to move. We discover few scenes drawn by her pen, which strike us as wonderfully true to physical fact. She does not make us *see* so much as *feel*. Compared with most great poets, she saw but little of the world. The greater part of her life was passed in retirement. Her knowledge of distant lands was derived from books. Hence she makes little pretension to the poetry of observation. Sketches copied directly from the visible universe are rarely encountered in her works. For such portraiture her mind was not remarkably adapted. There was another process far more congenial to her—the personation of feeling. She loved to sing of inciting events, to contemplate her race in an heroic attitude, to explore the depths of the soul, and

amid the shadows of despair and the tumult of passion, point out some element of love or faith unquenched by the storm. Her strength lay in earnestness of soul. Her best verses glow with emotion. When once truly interested in a subject, she cast over it such an air of feeling that our sympathies are won at once. We cannot but catch the same vivid impression; and if we draw from her pages no great number of definite images, we cannot but imbibe what is more valuable—the warmth and the life of pure, lofty, and earnest emotion.

# TENNYSON.

THE impression often given by Tennyson is similar to that derived from the old painters. There is a voluptuous glow in his colouring, warm and rich as that of Titian, yet often subdued by the distinct outline and chastened tone of the Roman school; while the effect of the whole is elevated by the pure expressiveness of Raphael. This is especially observable in all his love-sketches. Indeed we are inclined to believe that Tennyson is a poet chiefly through his sentiment. Not a grace of female character, not a trait of womanly attraction is lost upon him; and yet it is not a Flemish exactitude that charms us in his portraiture; on the contrary, what we recognize most cordially is his vagueness. He does not give the detail of character or person, nor elaborately depict a love-scene, nor minutely analyze a sentiment; but rather affords a few expressive hints that, like pebbles thrown into a calm stream, create ever-widening circles of association. If such an idea may be allowed, Tennyson deals rather in atmospheres than outlines. The effect of his best descriptive touches is owing chiefly to the collateral sentiment in the light of which they are drawn. In the "Miller's Daughter," for instance:

> "The meal-sack on the whitened floor,
> The dark round of the dripping wheel,
> The very air about the door
> Made misty with the floating meal;"—

is very Crabbe-like, but in the poem it is doubly picturesque because so naturally inspired by the memory of love. To use one of his own happy expressions, Tennyson is a "summer-pilot" to those who can heartily abandon themselves to his guidance. He gives, it may be, but glimpses of Nature, but they are such as to an imaginative mind, supersede and far surpass the tedious limning of less gifted poets. It has been remarked by a celebrated writer, that "the poet and artist has two things to do; to lift himself above the real, and to keep within the circle of the sensuous." In some of Tennyson's poems this law is exquisitely observed and illustrated. A series of physical descriptions constantly make us sensible of the actual world, while inwrought with this, the feeling of the piece, whether love, sorrow, or remorse, is kept vividly before us in all its abstract significance. As an instance, take "Mariana." We may notice, by the way, that this is a beautiful example of a true poet's suggestiveness. In "Measure for Measure" we have but a glance at this "poor gentlewoman." Tennyson introduces us to the "moated grange," so that we see her in all her desolation. "The rusted nails that fell from the knots that held the peach to the garden wall"—the moss crusted on the flower-pots—the poplar that "shook alway," and even the "blue fly that sung in the pane," are images full of graphic meaning, and give us the lonely sensation that belongs to the deserted mansion; and when, at the close of each stanza, the melancholy words of Mariana, bewailing her abandonment, fall on the ear with their sad cadence, we take in as completely the whole scene and sentiment as if identified with it. He is not, however, invariably as well sustained in his efforts; in fact, while we do justice to Tennyson's peculiar excellencies, we cannot but admit that when half developed or *pushed to* extremes, they become defects; and this ac-

counts for the remarkable difference of opinion which has been manifested in regard to him. No person of sentiment, (I use the word in its best sense,) can fail to espouse his claims with enthusiasm, for he has gone singularly near the heart of this mystery and written thereon with authority. Still he is sometimes grotesque and his feeling occasionally is morbid. He has performed some miracles of versification, and achieved verbal melodies, especially in his ballads, that vindicate most sweetly our so-called harsh Saxon idiom. Still even on this score he is chargeable at least with carelessness; yet is he one of those of whose faults we speak regretfully. His genius is, indeed, too precious for cavilling; let us rather endeavour to note some of its traits.

There is more or less of pathos in all true beauty. The delight it awakens has an undefinable and, as it were, luxurious sadness, which is perhaps one element of its might. It may be that this feeling springs from a sense of unattained good, of a perfection of being quite at variance with the present, which the beautiful never fails to suggest,—in the thought of "beauty and anguish walking hand in hand, the downward road to death;" or it may originate in that half-conscious memory of pre-existence to which are so often referred the aspirations of the heart. It is this blending of admiration and pity, of tenderness and awe which is the best indication of poetry both as an instinct and an art. If in reading or hearing read any production for the first time, these primal emotions are awakened, if an almost infinite capacity seems all at once revived, and while melted with a kind of pleading love, we are at the same time exalted by veneration—the spirit of poetry is in and around us. Were the feeling all pleasure it might be merely imaginative; were it chiefly the zest of novelty it might be gratified curiosity; but the "fearful joy" of the mood in question

is born where the senses and the soul meet and respond to one appeal—where the former thoroughly perceive and the latter deeply feels the glory of life and nature. "From my little experience," says a great poet of our own age, "thus much has become clear to me, that upon the whole one cannot through poetry make people happy, but, on the contrary, very uncomfortable." To stir associations which mar the complacency of prosaic existence; to renew youth's dreams until they glow in painful contrast with subsequent reality; to set forth with beauty that persuades even against our will;—the fair ideal—thus conforming "the show of things to the desires of the soul," is to touch many a chord of wild regret and suggest numberless hopes too lofty for easy realization. Hence it is only in an heroic spirit that the influence of poetry can be made consoling; it is only in the heart which adores truth that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever." Not to passive recipients of pleasurable reveries does the true bard minister. He moves us through our deepest sympathies; and the best evidence of his presence is felt "along the line of limitless desires." That Alfred Tennyson thus affects the reader who in any degree enters into his spirit is undeniable; and that he thus triumphs somewhat after an original method is equally clear; and this, in gratitude and sympathy, we can affirm without denying that his tone is, at times, not quite healthful, and his style occasionally emasculated by petty and needless affectation.

He has evidently fed his imagination at the best fountains. We trace continually his intimacy with Shakspere and Dante. In the "Dream of Fair Women," the beautiful description of Cleopatra is evidently drawn from the "wrangling queen whom everything becomes," of the great dramatist.

"We coursed about
The subject most at heart, more near and near,
Like doves about a dovecote, wheeling round
The central wish, until we settled there.

This fine metaphor we find thus expressed by the "grim Tuscan:"

"Quali colombe dal disio chiamate,
Con l'ali aperte a ferme al dolce nido
Vengon per aere da voler portate."*

But he makes the wisest use of Dante in frequently adopting the sententious and suggestive manner before alluded to. It is characteristic of Tennyson, admirably to improve familiar materials. Warmed by his imagination, clad in his felicitous language, or penetrated by his refined sentiment, the hackneyed theme or common object, are re-produced with a new and endearing beauty. How finely has he wrought up the old legend of Godiva. The description of her unrobing is just such a gem in its way, as the same incident in "The Eve of St. Agnes."

"Then fled she to her inmost bower and there
*Unclasped the wedded eagles of her belt,*
The grim Earl's gift; but ever at a breath
She lingered, looking like a summer moon
Half dipped in cloud; anon she shook her head,
*And showered the rippled ringlets to her knee;*
Unclad herself in haste; adown the stair
Stole on; and like a creeping sunbeam, slid
From pillar unto pillar, till she reached
The gateway; there she found her palfrey trapt
In purple, emblazoned with armorial gold."

Some passages of the "Lotos Eaters," give a sensation of luxurious repose far more consciously than the Castle of Indolence. How definitely the following stanza transports us to a beach—

"So shape chased shape as swift as when to land
Bluster the winds and tides the self same way,

* Inferno; Canto V

*Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level sand*
*Torn from the fringe of spray;*

And this to a woodland—

Growths of jasmine turned
Their humid arms festooning tree to tree,
And at their root through lush green grasses burned
The red anemone.

In the following verses we have presented three favourite subjects of the old masters, copied as it were, in dainty verbal mosaic:

"Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd
From off her shoulder backward borne,
From one hand droop'd a crocus; one hand grasp'd
The wild bull's golden horn.
* * * * * *
"Or else flushed Ganymede, his rosy thigh
Half buried in the eagle's down,
Sole as a flying star shot through the sky
Above the pillar'd town.
* * * * *
"Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx,
Sat smiling babe in arm."

Truth is the aim and essence of poetry as of science and art. It is in the endeavour to attain the essential features of a landscape, or the absolute facts of a moral experience, to bring them out almost palpably and to take them home to the reader's perception and sympathy—that the poet exercises his peculiar vocation. He may be said to be in love with Truth; and as Thomson was enamoured of the phenomena of outward nature, Byron of the adventurous, and Shelley of the ideal, Tennyson seems the devoted lover of truth in human relations, and especially in those based on voluntary sympathy and instinctive attraction. He has faith in that comfort which springs only from "division of the records of the mind." He is one of those

" Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn,
*The love of love.*"

We know not a more clear and effective plea against inconstancy—a more just and at the same time convincing argument in favour of the soul's rights as opposed to external benefits, than " Locksley Hall." Never, in our language at least, has infidelity, its consequences and influence been so truly exemplified. The workings of a noble mind under the withering consciousness of wasted and baffled affection, appear in undisguised earnestness. Few single poems have awakened more responses. To the large number who have compromised their sentiment, its stately lines must be as arrows of remorse; to the faithless it offers a picture of the evil they have caused, that silence the benign excuse—" they know not what they do"; and to the betrayed it revives in characters of fire, the hour of their self-pity and tearful scorn! In this poem we have the appeal of Love against Gain; in " Vere de Vere," " Lady Clare" and " The Lord of Burleigh"—against Birth. " Dora" is a sweet pastoral, hinting the effect of familiarity upon the affections. " The Talking Oak" gives expression to love in its flower, and the " Miller's Daughter" in its fruition; while the birth of the passion is described with singular delicacy in the " Gardener's Daughter."

In these and similar compositions, Tennyson opens new leaves in the heart; he bathes the fancy in the most entrancing illusions, and leads us gently back to the sources of rich and heavenly feeling. Nor is his sentiment mere tenderness; from the idea of loyalty amid obstacles, or self-sacrifice to the sense of right, it often is associated with the noblest resolution and the sweetest dignity. He asks;

" Of love that never found an earthly close,
What sequel? Streaming eyes and breaking hearts?
*Or all* the same as if he had not been?

> " *If this were thus, if this indeed were all,*
> *Better the narrow brain, the stony heart,*
> *The staring eye glazed o'er with sapless days,*
> *The long, mechanic pacing, to and fro,*
> *The set gray life and apathetic end.*
> *But am I not the nobler through thy love?*
> *O these times less unworthy! likewise thou*
> *Art more through love, and greater than thy years.*
> The sun will run his orbit and the moon
> Her circle. *Wait, and Love himself will bring*
> *The drooping power of Knowledge changed to fruit*
> *Of Wisdom.* Wait: my faith is large in Time,
> *And that which shapes it to some perfect end.*"

" Love and Duty," from which this extract is gleaned, reminds us of the selectest passages of the old dramatists in its united clearness and fervour. Who that has ever renounced from principle that to which his soul clung, feels not the significance of such language as this?

> " O then, like those that clench their nerves to rush
> Upon their dissolution, we two rose,
> There—*closing like an individual life*—
> In one blind cry of passion and of pain,
> Like bitter accusation even to death,
> *Caught up the whole of love and uttered it,*
> *And bade adieu forever.*

# MISS BARRETT.

GENUINE verse is an excellent safety-valve. I once heard the publication of a lady's effusions regretted by one of her sex, on the ground that she had "printed her soul." The objection is not without significance to a refined nature, but its force is much diminished by the fact that poetry is "caviare to the general." It is the few alone who possess any native relish for the muse, and a still more select audience who can trace the limits between fancy and the actual, or discover the separate fruits of personal experience and mere observation. Those capable of thus identifying the emanations of the mind with traits of character, and recognizing the innate desires or peculiar affections of a writer, and plucking out the heart of his mystery, will be the very ones to reverence his secret, or at least to treat it with delicacy. The truth is, no one can reach the fountains of emotion in another, except through sympathy—and there is a freemasonry, an instinctive mutual understanding thus awakened, which makes the revelation sacred. Accordingly there is little danger of a compromise of self-respect in uttering to the world our inward life, if any proper degree of tact and dignity is observed. The lovers of poetry are thus gratified; the deeper sentiments and higher aspirations of the universal heart are confirmed; solace is afforded the unhappy by confessions of kindred sorrow—and all the while, the privacy of the individual is uninvaded. At the

same time, let us acknowledge that authorship, as a career, is undesirable for a woman. Only when duty lends her sanction, or pre-eminent gifts seem almost to anticipate destiny, can the most brilliant exhibition of talent add to the intrinsic graces or true influence of the sex. There are circumstances, however, which not only justify but ennoble publicity. There are situations in life which in a manner evoke from retirement those whose tastes are all for seclusion. If we look narrowly into the history of those with whose thoughts and feelings literature has made us most intimate, it will often appear that in them there was combined a degree of sensibility and reflection which absolutely, by the very law of the soul, must find a voice, and that it was the pressure of some outward necessity, or the pain of some inward void that made that voice—(fain to pour itself out in low and earnest tones) —audible to all mankind. Some one has said that fame is love disguised. The points of a writer are usually those wherein he has been most alone; and they owe their effect to the vividness of expression which always results from conscious self-reliance. Literary vanity is a frequent subject of ridicule; but many confound a thirst for recognition with a desire for praise. The former is a manly as well as a natural sentiment. Indeed there is something noble in the feeling which leads an ardent mind—looking in vain for a response to its oracles among the fellow creatures amid which its lot is cast—to appeal to a wider circle and send its messages abroad on the wings of the press, in the hope and faith that some heart will leap at the tidings and accept them as its own. I am persuaded that this truly human craving for sympathy and intelligent communion, is frequently mistaken for a weaker and more selfish appetite—the morbid love of fame. High-toned and sensitive beings invariably find *their most* native aliment in personal associations. They

are sufficiently aware that notoriety profanes, that the nooks, and not the arena of life afford the best refreshment. It is usually because poverty, ill health, domestic trial, political tyranny, or misplaced affection, has deprived their hearts of a complete sanctuary, that they seek for usefulness and honour in the fields of the world.

"My poems," says Miss Barrett, "while full of faults, as I go forward to my critics and confess, have my soul and life in them." We gather from other hints in the preface and especially from her poetry itself, that the life of which it is "the completest expression" attainable, has been one of unusual physical suffering, frequent loneliness and great study. As a natural result there is a remarkable predominance of thought and learning, even in the most inartificial overflow of her muse. Continually we are met by allusions which indicate familiarity with classic lore. Her reveries are imbued with the spirit of antique models. The scholar is everywhere coevident with the poet. In this respect Miss Barrett differs from Mrs. Hemans and Mrs. Norton, in whose effusions enthusiasm gives the tone and colour. In each we perceive a sense of beauty and the pathos born of grief, but in the former these have a statuesque, and in the two latter a glowing development. The cheerfulness of Miss Barrett appears the fruit of philosophy and faith. She labours to reconcile herself to life through wisdom and her religious creed, and justifies tenderness by reason. This is a rather masculine process. The intellect is the main agent in realizing such an end. Yet discipline and isolation explain it readily; and the poetess doubtless speaks from consciousness when she declares the object of her art "to vindicate the necessary relation of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice." The defect of poetry thus conceived is the absence of spontaneous, artless and exuberant feeling. There is a certain hardness and formality,

a want of *abandon* of manner, a lack of gushing melody, such as takes the sympathies captive at once. We are conscious, indeed—painfully conscious—that strong feeling is here at work, but it is restrained, high-strung and profound. The human seems to find no natural repose, and strives, with a tragic vigour that excites admiration, to anticipate its spiritual destiny even while arrayed in mortal habiliments. Without subscribing to her theology we respect her piety. "Angelic patience" is the lesson she teaches with skill and eloquence. She would have the soul ever "*nobler than its mood.*" In her isolation and pain she communed with bards and sages, and found in their noble features, encouragement such as petty joys failed to give. She learned to delight in the ideals of humanity and gaze with awe and love on their

> Sublime significance of mouth,
> Dilated nostrils full of youth,
> *And forehead royal with the truth.*

In her view,

> Life treads on life and heart on heart—
> We press too close in church and mart,
> To keep a dream or grave apart.

And from all this she turns to herself, and cherishes her individuality with a kind of holy pride. She seeks in the ardent cultivation of her intellectual resources a solace for the wounds and privations of life. She reflects intensely—traces the footsteps of heroes—endeavours to make the wisdom of the Past and the truths of God her own—and finds a high consolation in embodying the fruits of this experience in verse:

> *In my large joy of sight and touch,*
> *Beyond what others count as such,*
> *I am content to suffer much.*

*It* would argue a strange insensibility not to recognise

a redeeming beauty in such an example. Miss Barrett is an honour to her sex, and no member thereof can fail to derive advantage from the spirit of her muse. It speaks words of "heroic cheer," and suggests thoughtful courage, sublime resignation, and exalted hope. At the same time, we cannot but feel her incompleteness. We incline to, and have faith in less systematic phases of woman's character. There is a native tenderness and grace, a child-like play of emotion, a simple utterance that brings more genial refreshment. We do not deprecate Miss Barrett's lofty spirit and brave scholarship. They are alike honourable and efficient; but sometimes they overlay nature and formalize emotion, making the pathway to the heart rather too long and coldly elegant for quick and entire sympathy. Yet this very blending of sense and sensibility, learning and love, reason and emotion, will do much and has already done much (as we can perceive by recent criticisms) to vindicate true sentiment and a genuine devotion to the beautiful. These glorious instincts are sternly rebuked every day under the name of enthusiasm, imagination and romance, as vain and absurd, by those who have intelligent but wholly practical minds. The sound and vigorous thought visible in Miss Barrett's poetry, and the self-dependence she inculcates, will command the respect and win the attention of a class who sneer at Tennyson as fantastic, and Keats as lack-a-daisical. They may thus come to realize how the most kindling fancies and earnest love, ay, the very gentleness and idealism which they deem so false and weak, may co-exist with firm will, rare judgment, conscientiousness and truth, lending them both fire and grace, and educing from actual and inevitable ill, thoughts of comfort like these.

> Think! the shadow on the dial
> For the nature most undone,

Marks the passing of the trial,
*Proves the presence of the sun!*
Look! look up in starry passion,
To the throne above the spheres,
Learn! the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's.
Hope! with all the strength thou usest
In embracing thy despair;
Love! *the earthly love thou lovest*
*Shall return to thee more fair;*
Work! make clear the forest tangling
Of the wildest stranger land;
Trust! the blessed deathly angels
Whisper "Sabbath hours at hand."

Miss Barrett's imagery is often Dantesque and Miltonic She evinces a certain distrust of her own originality but her tastes, both natural and acquired, obviously ally her to the more thoughtful and rhetorical poets. In the "Drama of Exile" are numerous passages, born of the same earnest contemplations which give such grave import to the language of the sightless bard of England, and the father of Italian song. The following are examples to the purpose:

. . . . As the pine,
In Norland forests, drops its weight of sorrows
By a night's grow.h, so growing towards my ends
I drop thy counsel.
* * * * * *
Drawing together her large globes of eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and out,
Around their continuity of gaze.

Adam, as he wanders from Paradise, exclaims,

How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us gray and ghast,
And stare *with blank significance of loss*
Right in our faces.

Lucifer narrates an incident with singular vividness:

Dost thou remember, Adam, when the curse
Took us from Eden? On a mountain peak

Half-sheathed in primal woods, and glittering
In spasms of awful sunshine, at that hour
A lion couched—part raised upon his paws,
With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,
*And his mane listening.* When the ended curse
Left silence in the world, right suddenly
He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,
As if the new reality of death
Were dashed against his eyes—and roared so fierce,
(Such thick, carniverous passion in his throat
Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear,)
And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
Such fast, keen echoes, crumbling down the oaks,
To distant silence, that the forest beasts,
One after one, did mutter a response
In savage and in sorrowful complaint,
Which trailed along the gorges. Then at once
He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height,
Hid by the dark-orbed pines."

Lucifer's curse is a grand specimen of blank verse. As instances of terse and meaning language, take the two brief stanzas descriptive of Petrarch and Byron. The phrase "forlornly brave," applied to the latter, is very significant:

Who from his *brain-lit heart* hath thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
*All perfumed with the name of one.*
* * * * *
And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave,
And salt as life, forlornly brave,
And grieving with the dart he drave.

"The Rhyme of the Duchess of May" and "Bertha in the Lane" are by no means perfect, artistically speaking, but they have genuine pathos. "To Flush, my Dog" is apt as a piece of familiar verse. "Cowper's Grave" and "Sleep" have a low, sad music, at once real and affecting; while many of the lines in "Geraldine" ring nobly and sweet; and in "The Crowned and Wedded,"

"The Lady's Yes," and other minor pieces, the true dignity of her sex is admirably illustrated. While thus giving Miss Barrett due credit for her versatile talent, we repeat that, in our view, the most interesting phase of her genius is her sincere recognition of that loyalty and tenderness—that "strong necessity of loving," and that divine reality of the heart, which are essential to all that is moving in poetry and all that is winsome in experience. Could we not trace the woman beneath attainment and reflection, our admiration might be excited, but our sympathies would not awaken.

The most beautiful passages of the "Drama," to our thinking, are such as these:

*Adam.* God! I render back
Strong benediction and perpetual praise
From mortal, feeble lips (as incense smoke
Out of a little censer may fill heaven)
That thou in striking my benumbed hands,
And forcing them to drop all other boons
Of beauty and dominion and delight,
Hast left this well-beloved Eve—this life
Within life, this best gift between their palms
In gracious compensation!

* * * * *

O my God!
In standing here between the glory and dark—
The glory of thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall; the dark of our distress
Which settles a step off in the drear world—
Lift up to thee the hands from whence have fallen
*Only Creation's sceptre*, thanking thee
That rather thou hast cast me out with *her*
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,
With angel looks and angel songs around,
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
*And make society full desertness*
*Without the uses of her comforting.*

* * * * *

. . . . Because with her I stand
Upright as far as can be in the fall,
And look away from heaven, which doth accuse me,
And look up from the earth which doth convict me,
Into her face; and *crown my discrowned brow,*
*Out of her love;* and put the thoughts of her
Around me for an Eden full of birds;
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart;
And with my lips upon her lips thus, thus—
*Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath,*
*Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides,*
*But overtops this grief.* . . . .

The essence of all beauty I call love,
The attribute, the evidence and end,
The consummation to the inward sense
Of beauty apprehended from without
I still call love. . . . .

. . . . Mother of the world,
Take heart before His presence. Rise, aspire
Unto the calms and magnanimities,
The lofty uses and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full work,
To which thou art elect forevermore,
First woman, wife and mother!

# DRAKE.

FINE social qualities are not so generally esteemed in this country as beyond the sea. Leisure is requisite for their exercise and enjoyment, and the vast majority of Americans are so busy, that a late traveller complains he could seldom find an opportunity to converse among them. The stranger doubtless used the phrase in its highest signification. Madame de Stael says, that the only legitimate subjects of conversation are those of universal interest. There are few readier methods whereby the mind can be set free from egotistical annoyances and narrow cares, than by such high and liberal communion. Genius is not restricted to the use of mechanical implements. The pen and the easel are not the only means by which gifted spirits impress us. The world is singularly unjust in its estimate of mental activity and usefulness. "Why should I be always writing?" asked Dr. Johnson, and who doubts now, that his talk was more efficient than his pen-craft? The auditors of Coleridge, who were capable of appreciating his eloquence, never complain that he produced so little; and those whose privilege it was to listen to the fluent wisdom of Allston, felt most deeply that he was not born merely to transfer his conceptions to canvass. The social powers and sympathies are a constituent element of genius. Quickened and warmed by their affections, the poet and artist are unconscious of labour. It is the aimless and lonely

efforts of the recluse, that bear the stamp of constraint. We can imagine what a work of love it was for the old masters to portray the beings to whom they were attached; and these are their fairest trophies. Petrarch's heavy epic is neglected, but the sonnets which were the genial overflowings of his enamoured heart are immortal. Are not the fresh, strong traits of the old English drama, somewhat owing to the mutual labours of their authors? Had not the pleasant gatherings at Wills' and Button's, considerable influence in producing the early British essayists? In truth, the social relations of genius form its best nursery and home. The attrition of mind with mind; the frank and kindly interchange of feeling, and the cheering ministrations of friendship, throw an atmosphere around the sensitive and ardent mind, in which its sweetest flowers bloom, and its best fruits mature. It was to please Lady Hesketh, that Cowper wrote the Task. There is no inspiration like love and friendship. The image of an endeared being is more encouraging to the child of song than any vision of ambition. "How hollow," exclaims Mrs. Hemans, in one of her letters, "how hollow seems the voice of Fame to an orphan!" There is something, too, that frequently chills all glow of thought in the very idea of the public. Compare the spontaneous letter with the long considered article; the versatile chat, full of individuality, with the monotonous dissertation so very scholar-like in style as to be attributed with equal reason, to fifty different writers. There is a certain etiquette, which every gentleman observes in a promiscuous assembly, that often effectually conceals his most interesting points of character, and identifies him with the multitude. A similar rule obtains in literature. To address the great mass with whom we have no intimate association, often seems a presumptuous or hopeless effort, and veneration for the

select yet equally unknown few, will daunt or formalize endeavour. But it is not a wearisome task to charm minds with whose tastes we are intimate, to enliven hearts that are devoted to our welfare, to delight a circle with which we are allied by the ties of old acquaintance and warm regard. One of our poets has written:

> "Friends my soul with joy remembers,
> How like quivering flames they start,
> When I fan the living embers
> On the hearth-stone of my heart."

Drake was an interesting example of the fostering influence of happy associations. Without these it may be doubted if he would ever have become known to fame. His was one of those gentle natures that, from a divine instinct, concentrate their sources of happiness. He had no faith in that coarser philosophy which stakes life's dearest hopes on the broad arena of the world. Familiar with the true inheritors of literary glory, he never could mistake temporary reputation for enduring fame. His taste was too refined, and his standard of excellence too exalted, to permit him to feel any complacency in regard to his own effusions. To domestic and social pleasures he looked for enjoyment, and poetry was chiefly valued as imparting to these new grace and sprightliness. It was only by degrees that the inquisitive public discovered in Drake the author of those spirited local poems, which, under the signature of Croaker, imparted such attraction to the newspapers of the day. Indeed, the truth was revealed, as the secrets of more lucrative trades often are, by the hazardous experiment of taking a partner. It was soon discovered that the mysterious "*Co.*" was no other than Halleck, and thence his friend's agency was easily inferred. This modest spirit was equally manifested by the poet during his last illness, when he exhibited perfect indifference as to the fate of his writings, and

obviously held them in very light estimation. The Culprit Fay for a long period only existed in manuscript, and was not printed until several years after the author's death. Indeed, he infinitely preferred love to admiration. The society and affection of his friends, was too precious to be weighed in the balance with renown. His brief career was devoted to his profession and the care of his family; and his recreations sought in literature and the companionship of a few kindred minds. When he returned from Louisiana in his twenty-sixth year, and found the disease on account of which he had made the voyage, wholly unalleviated, he became more than ever devoted, until his decease, which soon occurred, to these familiar and cherished resources. Drake's character must have been peculiarly endearing. His mental gifts alone would excite strong interest, but unallied, as they seem to have been, with ambition, how greatly their attraction was enhanced! Talent, which is absolutely given to personal objects, claims no suffrages from the heart; but the man of superior gifts, who voluntarily offers them at the altar of disinterested affection, cannot but win permanent and deep regard. Accordingly, the author of the Culprit Fay, young as he was, left a memory consecrated by the most tender regret. His cultivated taste gave an uncommon value to his literary opinions; his graceful humour threw a rare charm around the fireside, and his beautiful imagination hallowed the scenes of nature. Halleck's tribute is eloquent from its very simplicity. Earnest indeed, must have been the grief which thus silenced a harp so often struck in unison with that of the departed:

"Where hearts, whose truth is proven,
Like thine, are laid in earth,
There should a wreath be woven
To tell the world their worth.

"And I, who woke each morrow
To clasp thy hand in mine,
Who shared thy joy and sorrow,
Whose weal and woe were thine.

"It should be mine to braid it
Around thy faded brow,
*But I've in vain essayed it,*
*And feel I cannot now.*"

The miscellaneous poems of Drake are few. They indicate power of language and strong feeling, but there is nothing particularly characteristic about them. Leon is a promising fragment, with some very happy descriptive touches. The change which grief occasions in beauty, is thus strikingly portrayed:

"But he who casts his gaze upon her now,
And reads the traces written on her brow,
Had scarce believed her's was that form of light
That beamed like fabled wonder on the sight;
Her raven hair hung down in loosened tress
Before her wan cheek's pallid ghastliness;
And, thro' its thick locks, show'd the deadly white,
*Like marble glimpses of a tomb at night.*"

The last phrase in the following lines gives an excellent idea of a kind of female loveliness almost peculiar to this country:

"With so much graceful sweetness of address,
And such a form of *rounded slenderness.*"

Of his minor poems, the "American Flag" is the best known. It is remarkably spirited, although somewhat deformed by laboured epithets. The fourth stanza is perhaps the best and as glowing an effusion of patriotism as may be readily found in the same compass:

"Flag of the seas! on ocean wave
Thy stars shall glitter o'er the brave;
When death, careering on the gale,
Sweeps darkly round the bellied sail,

And frighted waves rush wildly back
Before the broadside's reeling rack,
Each dying wanderer of the sea
*Shall look at once to heaven and thee,*
And smile to see thy splendours fly
In triumph o'er his closing eye."

Let us turn to the most original of Drake's writings, that on which his fame as a poet chiefly rests—"The Culprit Fay."

Success in what may be called the poetry of Fancy, is comparatively rare. To describe what powerfully affects us requires command of language and imaginative power; but the chief requisite to such an end is intense feeling. Byron's peculiar energy lay almost wholly in this single attribute. His poetry is a reflection rather than a picture. It mirrors the struggles, the rapture, and the gloom, within his own heart; verse is the crucible in which his thoughts and emotions are fused and moulded into words. The poetry which springs from pure invention, which has "airy nothing" for its material, and succeeds in giving to this a "local habitation and a name," implies a creative faculty. This is true when the subject illustrates actual life, when a congruous and effective tale of human weal or sorrow is woven; but it is emphatically true when the subject itself has no precedent in common experience. It has been said that to transfuse our own life into what is feigned, is the prerogative of genius alone. It is certainly a very uncommon triumph to succeed in forming a consistent narrative, with ideal personages for its characters, which shall powerfully interest the imagination, and at the same time satisfy the judgment. This was achieved by Drake in "The Culprit Fay." It borrows just enough reality from the natural world to make its fanciful hero seem an actual being. Its incidents are few, but their details are so felicitously

conceived that interest is not only awakened but sustained. The metre is admirably varied. There are two or three verbal crudities, but, as a whole, the taste and spirit in which the design is wrought out is excellent. Of this class of poetry, some scenes in the Midsummer's Night's Dream, and the description of Queen Mab, by Mercutio, are exquisite specimens. The few who are fitted to excel as fanciful poets, are apt to fail from the abstract and cold beauty of their imagery, or the elaborate plan of the argument. Shelley was a remarkable instance in point. His "Revolt of Islam" abounds in pure fancy, but there is so little that appeals to primal sympathy, that most readers wonder at his genius rather than love its creations. A sweet atmosphere borrowed from this breathing world, insensibly blends with the aerial machinery of "The Culprit Fay." His sufferings and mortifications excite compassion, his adventures are followed with keen curiosity, and his success hailed with delight: and this, notwithstanding he is depicted as "a creature of the element." This ingenious and brilliant production originated in a discussion which, under one or another guise, is constantly renewed—the poetical capabilities of our young republic. It was argued by one that the absence of romantic associations, and the time-hallowed shrines of the Past, rendered this country an inhospitable home for the muses. Another suggested that our history was too recent to furnish impressive themes of song. Drake maintained that genius is independent of time and place, and that the poet, from the rich stores of his own invention, could array the freshest scene with grace and solemnity. But this, urged his opponent, includes the necessity of ideal characters, and no strong human interest will attach to these. The poet was confident of the principle upon which his faith was based; and he determined to convince his friends by experiment instead of reasoning.

Centuries hence, perchance, some lover of "The Old American Writers" will speculate as ardently as Monkbarns himself, about the site of Sleepy Hollow. Then the Hudson will possess a classic interest, and the associations of genius and patriotism may furnish themes to illustrate its matchless scenery. "The Culprit Fay" will then be quoted with enthusiasm. Imagination is a perverse faculty. Why should the ruins of a feudal castle add enchantment to a knoll of the Catskills? Are not the Palisades more ancient than the aqueducts of the Roman Campagna? Can bloody tradition or superstitious legends really enhance the picturesque impression derived from West Point? The heart forever asserts its claim. Primeval nature is often coldly grand in the view of one who loves and honours his race; and the outward world is only brought near to his spirit when linked with human love and suffering, or consecrated by heroism and faith. Yet, if there ever was a stream romantic in itself, superior from its own wild beauty, to all extraneous charms, it is the Hudson. Who ever sailed between its banks and scanned its jutting headlands,—the perpendicular cliffs,—the meadows over which alternate sunshine and cloud,—umbrageous woods, masses of grey rock, dark cedar groves, bright grain-fields, tasteful cottages, and fairy-like sails; who, after thus feasting both sense and soul, through a summer day, has, from a secluded nook of those beautiful shores, watched the moon rise and tip the crystal ripples with light, and not echoed the appeal of the bard?

"Tell me—where'er thy silver bark be steering,
By bright Italian or soft Persian lands,
Or o'er those island-studded seas careering,
Whose pearl-charged waves dissolve on coral strands:
Tell if thou visitest, thou heavenly rover,
A lovelier scene than this the wide world over?"*

* Hoffman's "Moonlight on the Hudson."

It was where

"The moon looks down on old Crow Nest,
And mellows the shade on his craggy breast,"

that Drake laid the scene of his poem. The story is of simple construction. The fairies are called together, at this chosen hour, not to join in dance or revel, but to sit in judgment on one of their number who has broken his vestal vow:

"He has loved an earthly maid,
And left for her his woodland shade;
He has lain upon her lip of dew,
And sunn'd him in her eye of blue,
Fann'd her cheek with his wing of air,
Play'd in the ringlets of her hair,
And nestling on her snowy breast,
Forgot the lily-king's behest."

His sentence is thus pronounced:

"Thou shalt seek the beach of sand,
Where the water bounds the elfin land;
Thou shalt watch the oozy brine
Till the sturgeon leaps in the bright moonshine,
Then dart the glittering arch below,
And catch a drop from his silver bow."

* * * * *

"If the spray-bead gem be won,
The stain of thy wing is wash'd away,
But another errand must be done
Ere thy crime be lost for aye;
Thy flame-wood lamp is quench'd and dark,
Thou must re-illume its spark;
Mount thy steed, and spur him high
To the heaven's blue canopy;
And when thou see'st a shooting star,
Follow it fast and follow it far—
The last faint spark of its burning train
Shall light thy elfin lamp again."

Evil sprites, both of the air and water, oppose the Fay *in his* mission of penance. He is sadly baffled and

tempted, but at length conquers all difficulties, and his triumphant return is hailed with "dance and song, and lute and lyre."

It is in the imagery of the poem that Drake's genius is pre-eminent. What, for instance, can be more ingenious that the ordeals prescribed had any "spot or taint" in his ladye-love deepened the Fay's sacrilege:

"Tied to the hornet's shady wings;
Toss'd on the pricks of nettles' stings,
Or seven long ages doom'd to dwell
With the lazy worm in the walnut shell;
Or every night to writhe and bleed
Beneath the tread of the centipede;
Or bound in a cobweb dungeon dim,
Your jailer a spider huge and grim,
Amid the carrion bodies lie
Of the worm, and the bug, and the murder'd fly."

Most appropriate tortures, these, for a fairy inquisition! Even without the metrical accompaniment, how daintily conceived are all the appointments of the fairies! Their lanterns were owlet's eyes. Some of them repose in cobweb hammocks, swinging, perhaps, on tufted spears of grass, and rocked by the zephyrs of a midsummer night. Others make their beds of lichen-green, pillowed by the breast-plumes of the humming-bird. A few, whose taste for upholstery is quite magnificent, find a couch in the purple shade of the four-o'clock, or the little niches of rock lined with dazzling mica. The table of these minnikin epicureans is a mushroom, whose velvet surface and quaker hue make it a very respectable festal board at which to drink dew from buttercups. The king's throne is of sassafras and spice-wood, with tortoise-shell pillars, and crimson tulip-leaves for drapery. But the quaint shifts and beautiful outfit of the Culprit himself, comprise the most delectable imagery of the poem. He is worn out with fatigue and chagrin at the very commencement of

his journey, and therefore makes captive of a spotted toad, by way of a steed. Having bridled her with silk-weed twist, his progress is rapid by dint of lashing her sides with an osier thong. Arrived at the beach, he launches fearlessly upon the tide, for among his other accomplishments, the Fay is a graceful swimmer; but his tender limbs are so bruised by leeches, starfish, and other watery enemies, that he is soon driven back.

The *materia medica* of Fairy-land is always accessible; and cobweb lint, and balsam dew of sorrel and henbane, speedily relieve the little penitent's wounds. Having refreshed himself with the juice of the calamus root, he returns to the shore, and selects a neatly-shaped muscle shell, brightly painted without, and tinged with pearl within. Nature seemed to have formed it expressly for a fairy boat. Having notched the stern, and gathered a colen bell to bale with, he sculls into the midst of the river, laughing at his old foes as they grin and chatter around his way. There, in the sweet moon-light, he sits until a sturgeon comes by, and leaps, all glistening, into the silvery atmosphere; then balancing his delicate frame upon one foot, like a Lilliputian Mercury, he lifts the flowery cup, and catches the one sparkling drop that is to wash the stain from his wing. Gay is his return voyage. Sweet nymphs clasp the boat's side with their tiny hands, and cheerily urge it onward. His next enterprise is of a more knightly species; and he proceeds to array himself accordingly, as becomes a fairy cavalier. His acorn helmet is plumed with thistle-down, a bee's nest forms his corselet, and his cloak is of butterflies' wings. With a lady-bug's shell for a shield, and wasp-sting lance, spurs of cockle-seed, a bow made of vine-twig, strung with maize-silk, and well supplied with nettle-shafts, he mounts his fire-fly Bucephalus, and waving his blade of blue grass, speeds upward to catch a "glim-

mering spark" from some flying meteor. Again the spirits of evil are let loose upon him, and the upper elements are not more friendly than those below. Fays are as hardly beset, it seems, as we of coarser clay, by temptations in a feminine shape. A sylphid queen of the skies, "the loveliest of the forms of light," enchants the wanderer by her beauty and kindness. But though she played very archly with the butterfly cloak, and handled the tassel of his blade while he revealed to her pitying ear "the dangers he had passed," the memory of his first love and the object of pilgrimage kept his heart free. Escorted with great honour by the sylph's lovely train, his career is resumed, and his flame-wood lamp at length re-kindled, and before the "sentry elf" proclaims "a streak in the eastern sky," the Culprit has been welcomed to all his original glory.

It will be observed that the materials—the costume, as it were—of this fairy tale, are of native and familiar origin. The effect is certainly quite as felicitous as that of many similar productions where the countless flowers and rich legends of the East, furnish the poet with an exhaustless mine of pleasing images. It has been remarked that the dolphin and flying-fish are the only poetical members of the finny tribes; but who, after reading the Culprit Fay, will ever hear the plash of a sturgeon in the moonlit water, without recalling the genius of Drake? Indeed, the poem which we have thus cursorily examined is one of those happy inventions of fancy, superinduced, upon fact, which afford unalloyed delight. There are various tastes as regard the style and spirit of different bards; but no one, having the slightest perception, will fail to realize at once that the Culprit Fay is a genuine poem. This is, perhaps, the highest of praise. The mass of versified compositions are *not* strictly poems. Here and there only the purely ideal is apparent. A

series of poetical fragments are linked by rhymes to other and larger portions of common-place and prosaic ideas. It is with the former as with moon-beams falling through dense foliage—they only chequer our path with light. "Poetry," says Campbell, "should come to us in masses of ore, that require little sifting." The poem before us obeys this important rule. It is "of imagination all compact." It takes us completely away from the dull level of ordinary associations. As the portico of some beautiful temple, through it we are introduced into a scene of calm delight, where Fancy asserts her joyous supremacy, and woos us to forgetfulness of all outward evil, and to fresh recognition of the lovely in Nature and the graceful and gifted in humanity.

# BRYANT.

It has been well observed by an English critic that Poetry is not a branch of authorship. The vain endeavour to pervert its divine and spontaneous agency into a literary craft, is the great secret of its recent decline. Poetry is the overflowing of the soul. It is the record of what is best in the world. No product of the human mind is more disinterested. Hence comparatively few keep the poetic element alive beyond the period of early youth. All that is genuine in the art springs from vivid experience, and life seldom retains any novel aspect to those who have long mingled in its scenes and staked upon its chances. A celebrated artist of our day, when asked the process by which his delineations were rendered so effective, replied, that he drew them altogether from memory. Natural objects were portrayed not as they impressed him at the moment, but according to the lively and feeling phases in which they struck his senses in boyhood. For this reason it has been truly observed, that remembrance makes the poet, and that emotions recollected in tranquillity form the true source of inspiration. A species of literature depending upon conditions so delicate is obviously not to be successfully cultivated by those who hold it in no reverence. The great distinction between verse-writers and poets is that the former seek and the latter receive; the one attempt to command, the other meekly obey the higher impulses of their being.

The first thought which suggests itself in regard to Bryant, is his respect for the art which he has so nobly illustrated. This is not less commendable than rare. Such an impatient spirit of utility prevails in our country, that even men of ideal pursuits are often infected by it. It is a leading article in the Yankee creed, to turn every endowment to account: and although a poet is generally left "to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancies," as he lists, occasions are not infrequent when even his services are available. Caliban's lowly toil will not supply all needs. The more "gentle spriting" of Ariel is sometimes desired. To subserve the objects of party, to acquire a reputation upon which office may be sought, and to gratify personal ambition, the American poet is often tempted to sacrifice his true fame and the dignity of Art to the demands of Occasion. To this weakness Bryant has been almost invariably superior. He has preserved the elevation which he so early acquired. He has been loyal to the Muses. At their shrine his ministry seems ever free and sacred, wholly apart from the ordinary associations of life. With a pure heart and a lofty purpose, has he hymned the glory of Nature and the praise of Freedom. To this we cannot but, in a great degree, ascribe the serene beauty of his verse. The mists of worldly motives dim the clearest vision, and the sweetest voice falters amid the strife of passion. As the patriarch went forth alone to muse at eventide, the reveries of genius have been to Bryant, holy and private seasons. They are as unstained by the passing clouds of this troubled existence, as the skies of his own "Prairies" by village smoke.

Thus it should be, indeed, with all poets; but we deem it singularly happy when it is so with our own. The tendency of all action and feeling with us, is so much the *reverse* of poetical, that only the high, sustained and con-

sistent development of the imagination, would command attention or exert influence. The poet in this republic, does not address ignorance. In truth, the great obstacle with which he has to deal, so to speak, is intelligence. It is not the love of gain and physical comfort alone, that deadens the finer perceptions of our people. . Among the highly educated there is less real enjoyment of poetry than is discovered by those to whom reading is almost a solitary luxury. No conformity to fashion or affectation of taste influence the latter. They seek the world of imagination and sentiment, with the greater delight from the limited satisfaction realized in their actual lot. To them Poetry is a great teacher of self-respect. It unfolds to them emotions familiar to their own bosoms. It celebrates scenes of beauty amid which they also are free to wander. It vindicates capacities and a destiny of which they partake. Intimations like these are seldom found in their experience, and for this reason,—cherished and hallowed associations endear an art which consoles while it brings innocent pleasure to their hearts. It is, therefore, in what is termed society, that the greatest barriers to poetic sympathy exist, and it is precisely here that it is most desirable, the bard should be heard. But the idea of culture with this class lies almost exclusively in knowledge. They aim at understanding every question, are pertinacious on the score of opinion, and would blush to be thought unacquainted with a hundred subjects with which they have not a particle of sympathy. The wisdom of loving, even without comprehending; the revelations obtained only through feeling; the veneration that awes curiosity by exalted sentiment—all this is to them unknown. Life never seems miraculous to their minds, Nature wears a monotonous aspect, and routine gradually congeals their sensibilities. To invade this vegetative existence is the poet's vocation. Hazlitt says all that is

worth remembering in life is the poetry of it. If so, habits wholly prosaic are as alien to wisdom as to enjoyment; and the elevated manner in which Bryant has uniformly presented the claims of poetry, the tranquil eloquence with which his chaste and serious muse appeals to the heart, deserve the most grateful recognition. There is something accordant with the genius of our country, in the mingled clearness and depth of his poetry. The glow of unbridled passion seems peculiarly to belong to southern lands where despotism blights personal effort, and makes the ardent pursuit of pleasure almost a necessity. The ancient communities of northern latitudes have rich literatures from whence to draw materials for their verse. But here, where Nature is so magnificent, and civil institutions so fresh, where the experiment of Republicanism is going on, and each individual must think if he do not work, Poetry, to illustrate the age and reach its sympathies, should be thoughtful and vigorous. It should minister to no weak sentiment, but foster high, manly and serious views. It should identify itself with the domestic affections, and tend to solemnize rather than merely adorn existence. Such are the natural echoes of American life, and they characterize the poetry of Bryant.

Bryant's love of Nature gives the prevailing spirit to his poetry. The feeling with him seems quite instinctive. It is not sustained by a metaphysical theory as in the case of Wordsworth, while it is imbued with more depth of pathos than is often discernible in Thomson. The feeling with which he looks upon the wonders of Creation is remarkably appropriate to the scenery of the New World. His poems convey, to an extraordinary degree, the actual impression which is awakened by our lakes, mountains, and forests. There is in the landscape *of* every country something characteristic and peculiar.

The individual objects may be the same, but their combination is widely different. The lucent atmosphere of Switzerland, the grouping of her mountains, the effect of glacier and waterfall, of peaks clad in eternal snow, impending over valleys whose emerald herbage and peaceful flocks realize our sweetest dreams of primeval life—all strike the eye and affect the mind in a manner somewhat different from similar scenes in other lands. The long, pencilled clouds of an Italian sunset—glowing above plains covered with brightly-tinted vegetation, seem altogether more placid and luxuriant than the gorgeous masses of golden vapour, towering in our western sky at the close of an autumnal day. These and innumerable other minute features are not only perceived but intimately felt by the genuine poet. We esteem it one of Bryant's great merits that he has not only faithfully pictured the beauties, but caught the very spirit of our scenery. His best poems have an anthem-like cadence, which accords with the vast scenes they celebrate. He approaches the mighty forest, whose shadowy haunts only the footsteps of the Indian has penetrated, deeply conscious of its virgin grandeur. His harp is strung in harmony with the wild moan of the ancient boughs. Every moss-covered trunk breathes to him of the mysteries of Time, and each wild flower which lifts its pale buds above the brown and withered leaves, whispers some thought of gentleness. We feel, when musing with him amid the solitary woods, as if blessed with a companion peculiarly fitted to interpret their teachings; and while intent in our retirement upon his page, we are sensible as it were, of the presence of those sylvan monarchs that crown the hill-tops and grace the valleys of our native land. No English park formalised by the hand of Art, no legendary spot like the pine grove of Ravenna, surrounds us. It is not the gloomy German forest with its

phantoms and banditti, but one of those primal, dense woodlands of America, where the oak spreads its enormous branches, and the frost-kindled leaves of the maple, glow like flame in the sunshine; where the tap of the woodpecker and the whirring of the partridge alone break the silence that broods, like the spirit of prayer, amid the interminable aisles of the verdant sanctuary. Any reader of Bryant, on the other side of the ocean, gifted with a small degree of sensibility and imagination, may derive from his poems the very awe and delight with which the first view of one of our majestic forests would strike his mind.

The kind of interest with which Bryant regards Nature is common to the majority of minds in which a love of beauty is blended with reverence. This in some measure accounts for his popularity. Many readers, even of poetical taste, are repelled by the very vehemence and intensity of Byron. They cannot abandon themselves so utterly to the influences of the outward world, as to feel the waves bound beneath them "like a steed that knows his rider;" nor will their enthusiasm so far annihilate consciousness as to make them "a portion of the tempest." Another order of imaginative spirits do not greatly affect the author of the Excursion from the frequent baldness of his conceptions; and not a few are unable to see the Universe through the spectacles of his philosophy. To such individuals the tranquil delight with which the American poet expatiates upon the beauties of Creation is perfectly genial. There is no mystical lore in the tributes of his muse. All is clear, earnest and thoughtful. Indeed, the same difference that exists between true-hearted, natural affection, and the metaphysical love of the Platonists, may be traced between the manly and sincere lays of Bryant and the vague and artificial effusions of transcendental bards. The former realize the definition

of a poet which describes him as superior to the multitude only in degree, not in kind. He is the priest of a universal religion; and clothes in appropriate and harmonious language sentiments, warmly felt and cherished. He requires no interpreter. There is nothing eccentric in his vision. Like all human beings the burden of daily toil sometimes weighs heavily on his soul; the noisy activity of common life becomes hopeless; scenes of inhumanity, error, and suffering grow oppressive, or more personal causes of despondency make "the grasshopper a burden." Then he turns to the quietude and beauty of Nature for refreshment. There he loves to read the fresh tokens of creative beneficence. The scented air of the meadows cools his fevered brow. The umbrageous foliage sways benignly around him. Vast prospects expand his thoughts beyond the narrow circle of worldly anxieties. The limpid stream upon whose banks he wandered in childhood, reflects each fleecy cloud and soothes his heart as the emblem of eternal peace. Thus faith is revived; the soul acquires renewed vitality, and the spirit of love is kindled again at the altar of God. Such views of Nature are perfectly accordant with the better impulses of the heart. There is nothing in them strained, unintelligible or morbid. They are more or less familiar to all, and are as healthful overflowings of our nature as the prayer of repentance or the song of thanksgiving. They distinguish the poetry of Bryant and form one of its dominant charms. Let us quote a few illustrations:

"I've tried the world—it wears no more
The colouring of romance it wore.
Yet well has Nature kept the truth
She promised to my ear'liest youth.
The radiant beauty shed abroad
On all the glorious works of God,
Shows frankly to my sobered eye
Each charm it wore in days gone by.

"To him who, in the love of Nature, holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware.
* * * *
. . . . Then the chant
Of birds, and chime of brooks, and soft caress
Of the fresh sylvan air, made me forget
The thoughts that broke my peace, and I began
To gather simples by the fountain's brink,
And lose myself in day-dreams. While I stood
In Nature's loneliness, I was with one
With whom I daily grew familiar, one
Who never had a frown for me, whose voice
Never rebuked me for the hours I stole
From cares I loved not, but of which the world
Deems highest, to converse with her; when shrieked
The bleak November winds, and smote the woods,
And the brown fields were herbless, and the shades
That met above the merry rivulet,
Were spoiled, I sought, I loved them still—they seemed
Like old companions in adversity.
* * * * *
"Stranger, if thou hast learned a truth which needs
No school of long experience, that the world
Is full of guilt and misery, and hast seen
Enough of all its sorrows, crimes and cares,
To tire thee of it, enter this wild wood,
And view the haunts of Nature. The calm shade
Shall bring a kindred calm, and the sweet breeze,
That makes the green leaves dance, shall waft a balm
To thy sick heart. Thou wilt find nothing here,
Of all that pained thee in the haunts of men,
And made thee loathe thy life."

Nothing quickens the perceptions like genuine love. From the humblest professional attachment to the most chivalric devotion, what keenness of observation is born under the influence of that feeling which drives away the

obscuring clouds of selfishness, as the sun consumes the vapour of the morning! I never knew what varied associations could environ a shell-fish, until I heard an old oyster-merchant discourse of its qualities; and a landsman can have no conception of the fondness a ship may inspire, before he listens, on a moonlight night, amid the lonely sea, to the details of her build and workings, unfolded by a complacent tar. Mere instinct or habit will thus make the rude and illiterate see with better eyes than their fellows. When a human object commands such interest, how quickly does affection detect every change of mood and incipient want—reading the countenance as if it were the very chart of destiny! And it is so with the lover of Nature. By virtue of his love comes the vision, if not "the faculty divine." Objects and similitudes seen heedlessly by others, or passed unnoticed, are stamped upon his memory. Bryant is a graphic poet, in the best sense of the word. He has little of the excessive detail of Street, or the homely exactitude of Crabbe. His touches, like his themes, are usually on a grander scale, yet the minute is by no means neglected. It is his peculiar merit to deal with it wisely. Enough is suggested to convey a strong impression, and often by the introduction of a single circumstance, the mind is instantly enabled to complete the picture. It is difficult to select examples of his power in this regard. The following scene from "A Winter Piece" is as picturesque as it is true to fact:

. . . . Come, when the rains
Have glazed the snow, and clothed the trees with ice;
While the slant sun of February pours
Into the bowers, a flood of light. Approach;
The incrusted surface shall upbear thy steps,
And the broad, arching portals of the grove
Welcome thy entering. Look! the massy trunks
Are cased in the pure crystal; each light spray,
Nodding and tinkling in the breath of heaven,
Is studded with its trembling water-drops,

That stream with rainbow radiance as they move.
But round the parent stem, the long, low boughs
Bend, in a glittering ring, and arbours hide
The glassy floor.
. . . Raise thine eye,—
Thou sees't no cavern roof, no palace vault;
There the blue sky, and the white drifting cloud
Look in. Again the wildered fancy dreams
Of spouting fountains frozen as they rose,
And fixed with all their branching jets in air,
And all their sluices sealed. All, all is light;
Light without shade. But all shall pass away
With the next sun. From numberless vast trunks,
Loosened, the cracking ice shall make a sound
Like the far roar of rivers, and the eve
Shall close o'er the brown woods as it was wont."

As instances of the felicitous blending of general with particular description, take the following:

"And from beneath the leaves that kept them dry,
Flew many a glittering insect here and there,
And darted up and down the butterfly,
That seemed a living blossom of the air,
The flocks came scattering from the thicket, where
Strolled groups of damsels, frolicsome and fair;
The farmer swung the scythe, or turned the hay,
*And 'twixt the heavy swaths the children were at play.*
* * * * *
. . . . These shades
Are still the abode of gladness; the thick roof
Of green and stirring branches is alive
And musical with birds, that sing and sport
In wantonness and spirit; while below
*The squirrel with raised paws and form erect*
*Chirps merrily.* . . .
* * * * *
The massy rocks themselves
And the old and ponderous trunks of prostrate trees
That lead from knoll to knoll a causeway rude,
Or bridge the sunken brook, and their dark roots,
With all their earth upon them, twisting high,
Breathe fixed tranquillity. The rivulet
Sends forth glad sounds, and tripping o'er its bed,

Of pebbly sand, or leaping down the rocks,
Seems with continuous laughter to rejoice
In its own being. Softly tread the marge,
*Lest from its midway perch thou scare the wren*
*That dips her bill in water.*"

Bryant is eminently a contemplative poet. His thoughts are not less impressive than his imagery. Sentiment, except that which springs from benevolence and veneration, seldom lends a glow to his pages. Indeed, there is a remarkable absence of those spontaneous bursts of tenderness and passion, which constitute the very essence of a large portion of modern verse. He has none of the spirit of Campbell, or the narrative sprightliness of Scott. The few humorous attempts he has published are unworthy of his genius. Love is merely recognized in his poems; it rarely forms the staple of any composition. His strength obviously consists in description and philosophy. It is one advantage of this species of poetry that it survives youth, and is by nature, progressive. Bryant's recent poems are fully equal if not superior to any he has written. With his inimitable pictures there is ever blended high speculation, or a reflective strain of moral comment. Some elevating inference or cheering truth is elicited from every scene consecrated by his muse. A noble simplicity of language, combined with these traits, often leads to the most genuine sublimity of expression. Some of his lines are unsurpassed in this respect. They so quietly unfold a great thought or magnificent image, that we are often taken by surprise. What a striking sense of mortality is afforded by the idea,—

"The oak
Shall send his roots abroad and pierce thy mould."

How grand the figure which represents the evening air, as

'God's blessing breathed upon the fainting earth."

In the same poem he compares

"The gentle souls that passed away,"

to the twilight breezes sweeping over a churchyard,—

"Sent forth from heaven among the sons of men,"
*And gone into the boundless heaven again."*

And what can be more suggestive of the power of the winds, than the figure by which they are said to

"Scoop the ocean to its briny springs"?—

He would make us feel the hoary age of the mossy and gigantic forest-trees, and not only alludes to their annual decay and renewal, but significantly adds,

"The century-living crow
Whose birth was in their tops, grew old and died."

To those who have never seen a Prairie, how vividly does one spread before the imagination, in the very opening of the poem devoted to those "verdant wastes;"

"There are the gardens of the desert, these
The unshorn fields boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no name—
The Prairies—I behold them for the first,
And my heart swells, while the dilated sight
Takes in the encircling vastness. So they stretch
In airy undulations far away,
As if the ocean in his gentlest swell,
Stood still with all his rounded billows fixed
And motionless for ever. Motionless?
No—they are all unchained again. The clouds
Sweep over with their shadows, and beneath,
The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye;
Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase
The sunny ridges."

He speaks of the beaver as rearing "his little Venice;" and the lonely place where the murdered traveller met his *doom*, is indicated in a brief stanza:

The red-bird warbled as he wrought
His hanging nest o'erhead,
*And fearless near the fatal spot*
*Her young the partridge led.*"

The unconscious flight of time, as years advance, is finely illustrated thus :

" Slow pass our days
In childhood, and the hours of light are long
Betwixt the morn and eve; with swifter lapse
They glide in manhood, and in age they fly;
Till days and seasons flit before the mind
*As flit the snow flakes in a winter's storm,*
*Seen rather than distinguished.*"

We are made to realize the antiquity of Freedom by a single expression :

——" thou didst tread
The earliest furrows on the mountain side,
*Soft with the deluge.*"

The progress of Science is admirably hinted in a line of " The Ages," when man is said to

" Unwind the eternal dances of the sky."

Instances like these might be multiplied at pleasure, to illustrate the efficacy of simple diction, and to prove that the elements of real poetry consist in truly grand ideas, uttered without affectation, and in a reverent and earnest spirit.

A beautiful calm like that which rests on the noble works of the sculptor, breathes from the harp of Bryant. He traces a natural phenomenon, or writes in melodious numbers, the history of some familiar scene, and then, with almost prophetic emphasis, utters to the charmed ear a high lesson or sublime truth. In that pensive hymn in which he contrasts Man's transitory being, with Nature's perennial life, solemn and affecting as are the im-

ages, they but serve to deepen the simple monition at the close:

> "So live, that when thy summons comes, to join
> The innumerable caravan that moves
> To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
> His chamber in the silent halls of death,
> Thou go not like the quarry slave at night,
> Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
> By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
> Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

In "The Fountain," after a descriptive sketch that brings its limpid flow and its flowery banks almost palpably before us, how exquisite is the chronicle that follows! Guided by the poet, we behold that gushing stream, ages past, in the solitude of the old woods, when canopied by the hickory and plane, the humming-bird playing amid its spray, and visited only by the wolf, who comes to "lap its waters," the deer who leaves her "delicate foot-print," on its marge, and the "slow-paced bear that stopt and drank, and leaped across." Then the savage war-cry drowns its murmur, and the wounded foeman creeps slowly to its brink to "slake his death-thirst." Ere long a hunter's lodge is built "with poles and boughs, beside the crystal well," and at length the lonely place is surrounded with the tokens of civilization:

> "White cottages were seen
> With rose trees at the windows; barns from which
> Swelled loud and shrill the cry of chanticleer,
> Pastures where rolled and neighed the lordly horse,
> And white flocks browsed and bleated.
> * * * * * *
> . . . Blue-eyed girls
> Brought pails, and dipped them in thy crystal pool,
> And children, ruddy cheeked and flaxen haired,
> Gathered the glistening cowslip from its edge."

Thus the minstrel, even

> "From the gushing of a simple fount,
> Has reasoned to the mighty universe."

What a just respect for humanity, recognizing its sacred claims with poetic emphasis, breathes in the "Disinterred Warrior:"

> "Gather him to his grave again,
> And solemnly and softly lay,
> Beneath the verdure of the plain,
> The warrior's scattered bones away,
> *Pay the deep homage taught of old,*
> *The homage of man's heart to death,*
> *Nor dare to trifle with the mould*
> *Once hallowed by the Almighty's breath.*"

The very rhythm of the stanzas "to a Waterfowl," gives the impression of its flight. Like the bird's sweeping wing, they float with a calm and majestic cadence to the ear. We see that solitary wanderer of the "cold thin atmosphere;" we watch, almost with awe, its serene course, until "the abyss of heaven has swallowed up its form," and then gratefully echo the bard's consoling inference:

> "He who from zone to zone,
> Guides through the trackless air thy certain flight,
> In the long way that I must tread alone,
> Will guide my steps aright."

But it is unnecessary to cite from pages so familiar; or we might allude to the grand description of Freedom, and the beautiful "Hymn to Death," as among the noblest specimens of modern verse. The great principle of Bryant's faith is that

> "Eternal love doth keep
> In his complacent arms, the earth, the air, the deep."

To set forth in strains the most attractive and lofty, this glorious sentiment, is the constant aim of his poetry.

Gifted must be the man who is loyal to so high a vocation. From the din of outward activity, the vain turmoil of mechanical life, it is delightful and ennobling to turn to a true poet,—one who scatters flowers along our path, and lifts our gaze to the stars,—breaking, by a word, the spell of blind custom, so that we recognize once more the original glory of the Universe, and hear again the latent music of our own souls. This high service has Bryant fulfilled. It will identify his memory with the loveliest scenes of his native land, and endear it to her children forever.

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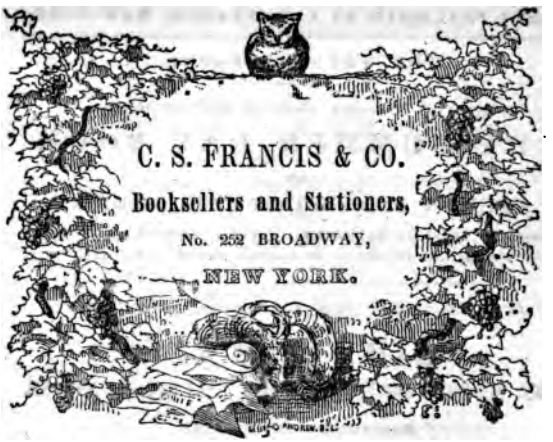


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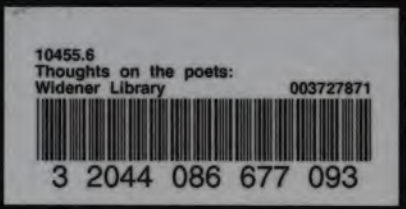
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